DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 300 535 CE 051 104

AUTHOR Aslanian, Carol B.; Brickell, Henry M.
TITLE How Americans in Transition Study for College Credit.
INSTITUTION Aerospace Education Council of Michigan, Lansing.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-87447-312-8
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 129p.
AVAILABLE FROM College Board Publications, Box 886, New York, NY 10101-0886 ($9.95; 5 or more: 20% discount).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Statistical Data (110)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Development; Adult Education; *Adult Learning; *Adult Students; Behavior Change; Career Change; *College Credits; Educational Research; Middle Aged Adults; *Midlife Transitions; *Student Motivation

ABSTRACT

This report presents the findings from a study to describe how Americans in transition study for college credit and to establish the extent of degree versus nondegree study. Introductory materials discuss why and how the study was made and the annual rate of adult credit study. Part I describes the demographic characteristics of the 1,000 adults interviewed who had taken a course or an entire program for college credit at any time in the previous two years. A discussion of each characteristic makes observations and offers interpretations. A graph illustrating the findings follows each discussion. Part II begins with descriptions of the type and nature of degree study among adults and then continues with descriptions of patterns of adult study among both degree and nondegree students combined. The same format as in part I is followed: observations, interpretations, and a bar graph. Part III concludes the report with descriptions of differences among adult students with respect to demographic characteristics and patterns of study. (YLB)

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How Americans in Transition Study for College Credit

How Americans in Transition Study for College Credit

Carol B. Aslanian
Henry M. Brickell

College Entrance Examination Board, New York, 1988

The College Board is a nonprofit membership organization that provides tests and other educational services for students, schools, and colleges. The membership is composed of more than 2,500 colleges, schools, school systems, and education associations. Representatives of the members serve on the Board of Trustees and advisory councils and committees that consider the programs of the College Board and participate in the determination of its policies and activities.

Copies of this book may be ordered from: College Board Publications, Box 886, New York, New York 10101-0886. The price is $9.95. Editorial inquiries concerning this study should be directed to Editorial Office, The College Board, 45 Columbus Avenue, New York, New York 10023-6992.

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ISBN: 0-87447-312-8

Printed in the United States of America.

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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A study of this magnitude and importance required the assistance of a number of people. We are grateful to the staff members of both the College Board and Policy Studies in Education, all of whom expended much time and effort in conducting this examination of how adults study for college credit.

At the College Board, Brian O'Reilly's overall supervision of key tasks in the study helped make it successful. His assistance in shaping the questions to be answered by the study, his careful attention to the data collected, and his scrutiny of our final report, were invaluable. Elena Morris supported us well by insuring that the telephone contacts made with over 10,000 households were carried out in ways that met sound methodological standards and that accurate information was collected. Her critiques of our observations and interpretations, based on years of experience in the field of adult learning and with educators who participate in the workshops she directs, also improved the quality of our work. Deborah Carey was exceptionally skillful in helping the College Board staff in both the technical coordination of the study and in preparing the final documents. Her dedication to the entire project was exceptional. Mareta Hamre, of Policy Studies in Education, prepared and pilot tested the interview guide, which became the major underpinning of the entire project. Her contribution was invaluable.

Further, we appreciate the services of two telephone-interviewing agencies in the conduct of more than 10,000 household interviews nationwide. Edwin Lebby and Lindsay Allen managed the interview tasks extremely well and with high standards of performance for their respective agencies. Their capable interviewers enabled us to reach efficiently the high number of households that participated in the study.

We are grateful also to Rex Jackson who analyzed the data collected from the adults who were interviewed. His technical expertise was invaluable to our use of the data.

The editor of this manuscript, Patricia A. Wyatt of the College Board staff, was indispensable in the final stages of pulling all the pieces together and in making the research data and the narrative fit cohesively. Her editorial skills, patience, and high standards have produced a readable and attractive report.

Finally, but most important, we are grateful to the 1,000 Americans who told us about their remarkable efforts in returning to school in the pursuit of degrees and credit courses. Their descriptions of what they studied, how they studied, and their levels of satisfaction with the institutions they attended made this study a reality.

It is to be hoped that the observations and interpretations made in this report will assist colleges across the country to meet the needs of the soon-to-become new majority in higher education – the adult student.

C.B.A.
H.M.B.

New York
June 1988

How Americans in Transition Study for College Credit

In 1980, the College Board published the results of a nationwide study of adult learning in a report titled *Americans in Transition: Life Changes as Reasons for Adult Learning*. That major investigation addressed an important question not satisfactorily answered at that time: why do adults learn when they do? Using the results of face-to-face interviews and telephone conversations that were conducted with almost 2,000 adult Americans 25 years of age and older, the study offered an explanation of the causes of adult learning and the timing of adult learning. Those findings have served to increase what is known about adult learners and improve the practices for serving them.

That 1980 study drew the following principal conclusions:

Most adults do not learn for the sheer pleasure of learning. For most, learning is not its own reward. Many enjoy the process of learning; some do not. Many enjoy knowing something new; some do not. But neither the process of learning nor the possession of knowledge are the reasons why most adults learn. Most people learn because they want to use the knowledge.

Adults learn in order to cope with change in their lives. Regardless of their demographic characteristics, almost all adult learners point to their own changing circumstances as their reasons for learning. It is being in transition from one status in life to another that causes most adults to learn. Adults learn what they need to know in order to be successful in their new status. Adults enter a learning experience in one status and expect to leave it in another.

Transitions – and the learning needed to accomplish them – occur unevenly at various stages of adult life. More than half are career transitions; a smaller but substantial fraction are family or leisure transitions; a few are art, health, or religious transitions; almost none are citizenship transitions. The major purpose for adult learning is to acquire occupational skills. The occupational motive outweighs all other motives combined.

Every adult who learns because of a transition can point to a specific event in his or her life that signaled, precipitated, or triggered the transition and, thus, the learning. Getting hired

or getting fired, getting married or getting divorced, getting sick, getting elected, or moving to a new city are the kinds of events that tell adults it is time to learn something new. For adults in transition, specific life events set the time on the learning clock: to know their life schedules is to know their learning schedules. The need, the opportunity, and even the desire are not sufficient to cause most adults to learn at any particular time. There are millions of potential adult learners who need to learn, want to learn, and have the chance to learn. But it takes specific life events to convert most of them from latent learners into active learners. Decisions to learn may be pending for a long time, but the timing of their entry into the learning arena will be determined by particular events that permit them, or force them, to enter it.

Trigger events occur unevenly in several arenas of adult life. More than half are career triggers, and almost all the remainder are family triggers. Only a tiny fraction occur in other life areas, chiefly, health.

While the topic an adult chooses to learn is always related to the life transition requiring that learning, the topic is not always related to the event triggering the learning. The kinds of life changes adults make – often having to do with a career, family, or leisure time – dictate the kinds of learning an adult accomplishes. It could be accounting, or cooking, or golf, and so on. But the event triggering the decision to be an accountant may be a divorce; the event triggering the decision to cook in different ways may be a heart attack; and the event triggering the decision to play golf may be retirement. The value of knowing what kinds of *transitions* cause adult learning lie in being able to predict *what* they will learn. The value of knowing *what* kinds of events *trigger* adult learning lies in being able to predict *when* they will learn.

While the 1980 study investigated *why* and *when* adults study, it did not address the domain of this investigation: *how* adults study.

Two conditions caused us to undertake this study. One was the extraordinary growth in the number of adults studying for college credit. The other was the extraordinary uncertainty among college administrators about how adults study for college credit.

The 1987 *Digest of Educational Statistics* had this to say about college credit study:

> ... the number of older students has been growing more rapidly than the number of younger students. Between 1970 and 1985, the enrollment of students under age 25 increased by 15 percent. During this same period, enrollment of persons age 25 and over rose 114 percent. In the latter part of this period from 1980 to 1985,

enrollments of students under 25 decreased by five percent, while the enrollments of persons 25 and older increased by 12 percent.*

How are those adults studying? There were no satisfactory answers to that question. It seemed important to understand the study patterns of adults inasmuch as they represent almost half of the entire body of college credit students. That was the first reason for undertaking this investigation.

As the College Board's Office of Adult Learning Services expanded its work with higher education administrators throughout the country during the 1980s, it became more and more clear that the administrators did not have a firm understanding of how adults study for college credit. Despite the growing numbers returning to college for degrees and for individual credit courses, higher education administrators did not have reliable information on exactly how those adults carried out their study. Administrators debated, but could not answer, questions such as these:

- Are adults serious about credit study, or do they drop out before earning degrees?
- Does it really take five or seven or nine adults to equal the credit load taken by one younger student, or does it take only two or three adults?
- Do adults study only at night, or can they be attracted to campus during the day?
- Do adults require all manner of academic and psychological support services, or are adults more self-sufficient than younger students?
- Do adults need large amounts of financial aid, or can they make it financially on their own?

Answering those questions, and many others like them, was the second reason for undertaking this investigation.

While the College Board recognizes that increasing numbers of adults are engaged in noncredit study, both in colleges as well as in other institutions, it was beyond the reach of the current study to tackle both credit and noncredit learning domains. Thus it was decided to limit the inquiry to how Americans in transition study for college credit. The Board plans a study of how Americans in transition engage in noncredit study some time in the not-too-distant future.

**Digest of Educational Statistics*. Center for Educational Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., May 1987. (Table 103.)

The people with whom we spoke and the questions we asked produced findings that enhanced our understanding of adult students in ways we could not have anticipated. A description of the sample population and the interview guide used in this nationwide study are presented below.

The Sample

The study called for a sample of 1,000 adults 25 years of age or older who had taken a course or program for college credit in the previous two years to be interviewed individually by telephone. To complete 1,000 telephone interviews, the following procedures were carried out.

First, a sample of 40,000 households was estimated as being sufficient to produce the quota of 1,000 completed interviews. For each of 48 states (Alaska and Hawaii were not included) and the District of Columbia, a given number of households was selected at random in proportion to each state's share of all households nationwide. For example, New York State holds roughly 7.5 percent of all households in the country, excluding Alaska and Hawaii. Consequently, the College Board sample of 40,000 households contained 3,000 New York State households. No state was oversampled or undersampled.

Second, telephone calls were made to a random sample of households within each state. Trained interviewers conducted calls between 5 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. (local time) on weekdays, 10 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. on Saturdays, and 1 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. on Sundays. When a household was contacted, the interviewer described the purpose of the study and asked for the number of people living in the household who were 25 years of age or older. When more than one adult qualified, the interviewer chose an adult at random. The selected adult was interviewed if he or she could say yes to the following question: Have you taken a course or program for college credit in the past two years? If the first adult selected could not answer affirmatively, other eligible adults in the household were asked the same question in a search for a qualified adult.

The interviewers dialed a total of 20,871 household telephone numbers and, of that total, they spoke with individuals in 10,808 households. No contact was made with the remaining 10,063

households, either because there was no answer, the line was busy, the number was not a working number, the number was not for a household, English was not spoken, or the person with whom the interviewer spoke did not have the information requested. (Respondents who did not speak English or did not have the information requested made up only 180 of the 10,063 households that were dialed but where no contact was made.)

The 10,808 households contacted yielded 1,000 households containing one or more adults 25 years of age or older who had studied for college credit in the previous two years (700 of them in the previous year). The remaining 9,808 households were primarily those where no one in the household had studied for college credit in the past two years, but also included respondents who either refused to be interviewed or terminated the interview before it was completed, or where no one in the household was 25 years of age or older.

The 10,808 households contained 17,908 people who were 25 years of age or older. Of those 17,908, 761 (4.3 percent) had studied for college credit in the previous year. The tables below display these data.

Credit Study Among Adults One Year Prior to Telephone Contact

Number of households contacted	Number of adults age 25 or older living in those households	Number of adults age 25 or older who had studied for credit	Percentage of adults age 25 or older who had studied for credit
10,808	17,908	761	4.3

Adult Credit Study Among Households One Year Prior to Telephone Contact

Number of households contacted	Number of households with one or more adults who had studied for credit	Percentage of households with one or more adults who had studied for credit
10,808	700	6.5

In short, about one out of every 25 adults 25 years of age or older has studied for college credit in a given year. Such adults can be found in about one out of every 15 households.

The number of households in which the residents refused to talk to the telephone interviewers totaled 2,453, or 23 percent of the 10,808 households contacted. In developing the figures shown above, all those who refused to speak to the interviewers were counted as nonlearners. That is, although it would have been reasonable to assume that some who refused were members of households where they or others had studied for credit in the past two years, the study took the most conservative point of view by treating all those who refused to respond as nonlearners. The figures reported above are, therefore, minimums.

The Telephone Interview Guide

In order to describe as fully as possible how Americans in transition study for college credit, and to establish the extent of degree versus nondegree study, the following topics were included in the interview guide:

Degree Study Only

- Type of degree
- Field of study for degree
- Time of study for degree
- Transfer of credit toward a degree
- Plans for completing degree

Degree and Nondegree Study Combined

- Type of college
- Reasons for selecting college
- Fields of study for courses
- Undergraduate or graduate study
- Credits earned
- Type of faculty
- Class size
- Course schedule
- Place of study
- Travel from home or work and amount of time spent travelling
- Cost of courses
- Satisfaction with college
- Preferred services
- Personal characteristics

Through pilot testing, the telephone interview guide was revised several times, based on the responses of more than 50 randomly selected adults who had studied for college credit in the previous two years. The telephone interviews conducted using the procedures established in the final guide lasted roughly 15 minutes each, and all interviews were conducted in February and March of 1986.

This study found that about 4.3 percent of adults age 25 and older are engaged in college credit study in a year. Applying that 4.3 percent to the approximately 147 million adults who were age 25 and older in 1985 produces a total of about 6.2 million adult credit students for that year. How does that figure compare to other statistics for adult credit study?

The 6.2 million is noticeably higher than the 5.1 million for 1985 reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the United States Department of Education. How can the difference be so large? Which figure is correct? The 6.2 million is itself a conservative estimate inasmuch as it assumes that none of the adults in the 23 percent of the households who refused to be interviewed by the College Board were taking credit courses. How can the NCES estimate be even lower?

In 1985, the NCES annual questionnaire used to collect college credit enrollment as of October – the Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) form – did not request enrollment by age from the 3,400 two-year and four-year colleges surveyed. That situation changed in the fall of 1987 with the inauguration of the NCES Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which began to collect college enrollment by age. But that was not the case with HEGIS in 1985. Instead, NCES depended on the Bureau of the Census of the United States Department of Commerce for age data from the bureau's triennial population survey conducted in 1985.

The bureau carried out its triennial telephone survey of a representative, nationwide sample of households in October of 1985. Its interviewers asked the ages of those persons in the household who were enrolled in school or were attending school during the previous week. For those who were, the interviewers also gathered information as to the kinds of schools they were attending and whether they were enrolled part time or full time. The bureau subsequently reported that, as of October 1985, 42 percent of all the college credit students identified in its telephone survey were men and women who were 25 years of age or older. Applying the bureau's

42 percent for October 1985 to the NCES total of 12.2 million credit students reported by 3,400 colleges on its own HEGIS forms as of October 1985, NCES calculated the adult enrollment to be 5.1 million. That was a quite reasonable estimate, given the figures available to NCES.

However, there are two serious shortcomings in the NCES total enrollment figure of 12.2 million, and one serious shortcoming in the Bureau of the Census' 42 percent figure as estimates of total annual enrollment.

The shortcomings common to the figures of both NCES and the Bureau of the Census are that each one comes from an October snapshot. Understandably, both agencies want to report an "unduplicated headcount," enumerating each student only once. Both accomplish this by fixing a date in October because that is when school is well under way and enrollment has settled down. Admitted students who failed to enroll are off the books, enrolled students who failed to register for the fall semester will not be counted, the late registrants have already signed up, and the early leavers have already withdrawn. Things are as steady as they will get: The college has its students for the year and it is time to count.

Those assumptions, grounded in long experience with students of traditional age, do not fit the behavior of adult students. Many adults register for the fall session but many do not. Some do not register until the winter, others wait until the spring, and still others do not register until the summer. And many of those who did not register in the previous fall will not register in the next fall and will continue to be missed by both NCES and the Bureau of the Census in their October roundups. (The new NCES IPEDS will do nothing to solve this problem.)

The result is that both NCES and the Bureau of the Census undercount total annual adult enrollment in college credit programs. In fact, both agencies undercount the total annual enrollment of younger students in college credit programs as well because so many younger students now "act like adults". That is, many of them have broken away from the tradition of "traditional-age" students. They begin in any session they choose and do not attend continuously. The result is that many of the traditional-age students are not on hand for the traditional October census. Even so, the under counting of younger students is not as severe as the under counting of adults, since a lower proportion of adults study on the traditional schedule.

The second shortcoming of the NCES October count is that many colleges do not report complete figures. Colleges offer many credit programs in nontraditional modes. Such credit programs can be sponsored by diverse administrative units, located in diverse places,

scheduled at diverse times, taught by diverse instructors, and conveyed in diverse ways. They include continuing education programs, summer sessions, off-campus courses, weekend programs, intersessions, television courses, evening divisions, courses by newspaper, independent study, study abroad, radio courses, credit-for-life experiences, military courses subsequently converted to college credits, correspondence courses, videotape and audiotape courses, contract training for organizations, instruction by computer network, credit by examination, and other programs bounded only by the imagination of their designers.

Students often do not register for programs by standing in line during a traditional registration week. The college registrar may get the records late or may not get them at all. Even when such programs are in operation during October, their registrants may not be reported to NCES by HEGIS.

Adults are enrolled disproportionately in the types of programs described above, many of which are intentionally designed to attract adults, and, as a result, are disproportionately undercounted.

In short, total annual college credit enrollment may be well beyond the 12.2 million reported by NCES. The data collected in this study suggest that it is at least 13.2 million, and probably more – perhaps 13.5 million.

The *adult share* of total annual college credit enrollment also may be beyond the 42 percent reported by the Bureau of the Census. The data collected in this study suggest that it is at least 45 percent. And the adult share, which has grown continuously since 1970, will continue to grow.

This report has three parts. Part I describes the demographic characteristics of the 1,000 adults interviewed who had taken a course or an entire program for college credit at any time in the previous two years. Part II begins with descriptions of the type and nature of degree study among adults and then continues with descriptions of patterns of adult study among both degree and nondegree students combined. Part III concludes the report with descriptions of differences among adult students with respect to demographic characteristics and patterns of study.

The reader should bear one important point in mind: this description does not necessarily fit the study patterns of adults in any one community in United States. Rather, the data describe the study patterns of adults in all communities combined. Thus, they cannot be used as a template for planning the program in any one college. Local community surveys would have to be undertaken to do that.

The demographic characteristics of the 1,000 adults interviewed are described here. Because few noteworthy differences between the characteristics of adult degree students and adult nondegree students surfaced, the data for both are combined in the charts and in the observations and interpretations accompanying them.

The demographic characteristics examined are as follows:

- Age
- Sex
- Marital status
- Race and ethnic background
- Life role
- Education
- Total family income
- Area of residence
- Population of place of residence

On the whole, the 1,000 adults interviewed proved to have the kind of upscale demographic characteristics that previous studies have shown to be typical of adults who learn.

1. Age

Observation

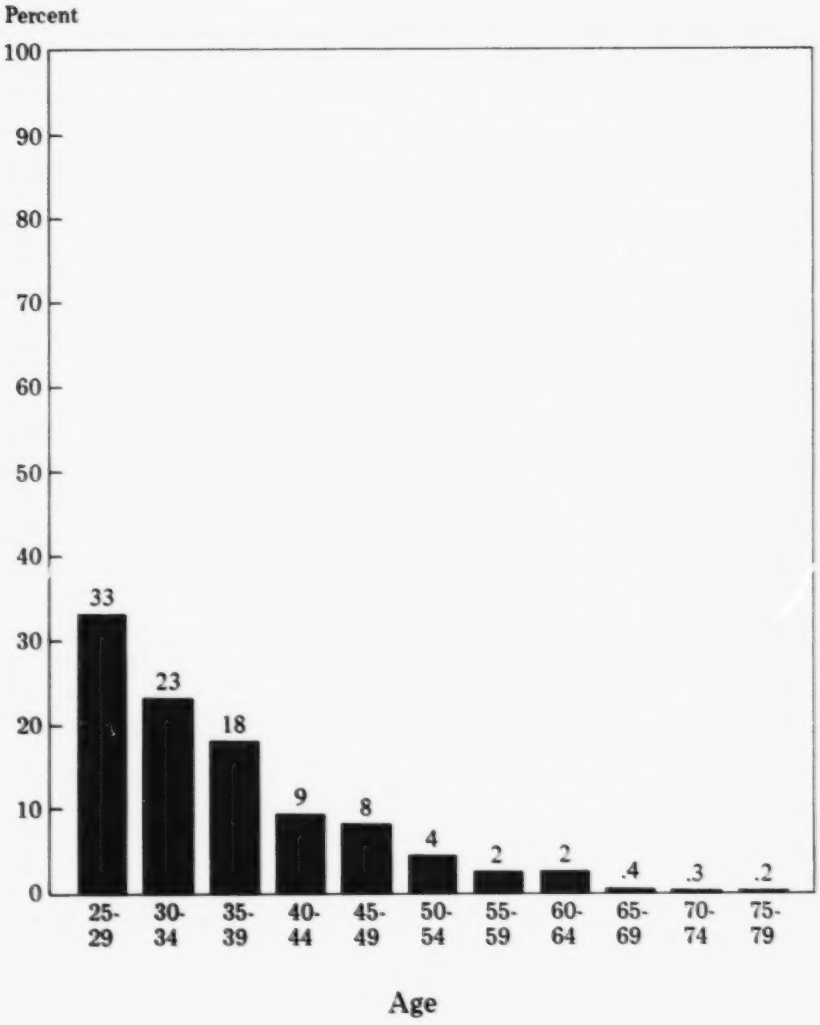
- Adult participation in college study decreases with every increase in age.
- A nearly perfect staircase steps down abruptly at the age of 40 to a series of gently sloping plateaus.
- The younger an adult, the more likely to study; the older an adult, the less likely to study.

Interpretation

- The age distribution of adult learning does not follow the age distribution of the nation's adult population. Clustering adults by age demonstrates vividly that each succeeding age cluster produces fewer learners:

Age cluster	Percentage of nation's adult population	Percentage of nation's adult students
25-34	30	56
35-44	22	27
45-54	16	12
55-64	15	4
65 or older	17	1

- Life transitions requiring learning slow with age. As adults get older, their lives undergo fewer changes. The pressures on them to learn in order to cope with those changes diminish accordingly. Career changes and job changes, for example, occur less often. Because the majority of adult learning is job related, the slowing of job changes means a slowing of adult study.
- Adult study shifts somewhat away from credit study and somewhat toward noncredit study as adults get older. Having earned their degrees, some adults continue to learn, but not for college credit. Any display of credit study by age will somewhat understate the total amount of study actually taking place among older adults.


Percent
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8
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2
2
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.3
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30-34
35-39
40-44
45-49
50-54
55-59
60-64
65-69
70-74
75-79
Age

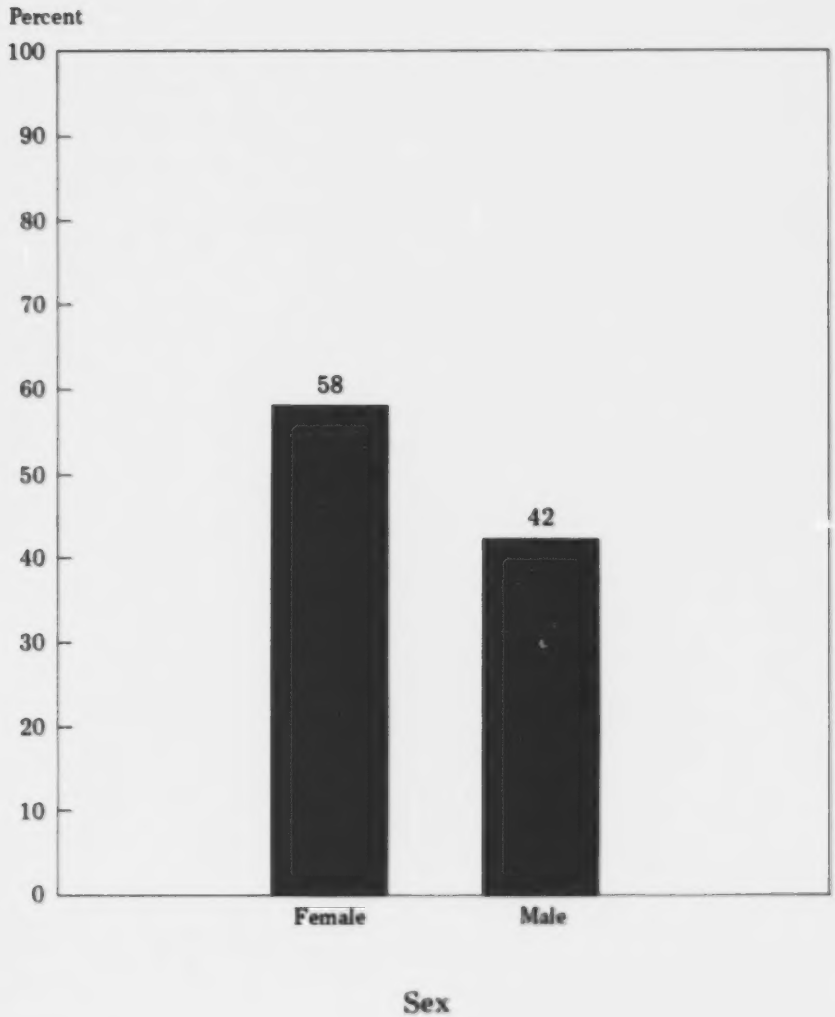
2. Sex

Observation

- More women than men study as adults.
- Nevertheless, there is a substantial population of adult men in college classrooms.

Interpretation

- College programs for adult students are designed to be especially attractive to women.
- The findings reflect a difference in life schedules: some women are doing later what some men did earlier.
- Home and family responsibilities delay or interrupt the college study of more women than men.
- Some women enter the work force later than most men and undertake college study at that time as a means of entry.
- Fewer women than men work outside the home, giving adult women more time for college study.
- The nation still has a large pool of capable, undereducated women, a leftover from earlier years when fewer women than men went to college after high school graduation. Women will be more numerous than men among adult students until that pool has been emptied.
- Women will gradually erase the head start men had, which means that by age 50, both groups will have had the same years of college study.
- Because women are matching the college-going rate of men when they leave high school, and because they are exceeding the college-going rate of men when they are 25 and older, women will eventually obtain more years of college education than men, reversing the historical pattern.


Percent
100
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80
70
60
50
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58
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Female
Male
Sex

3. Marital Status

Observation

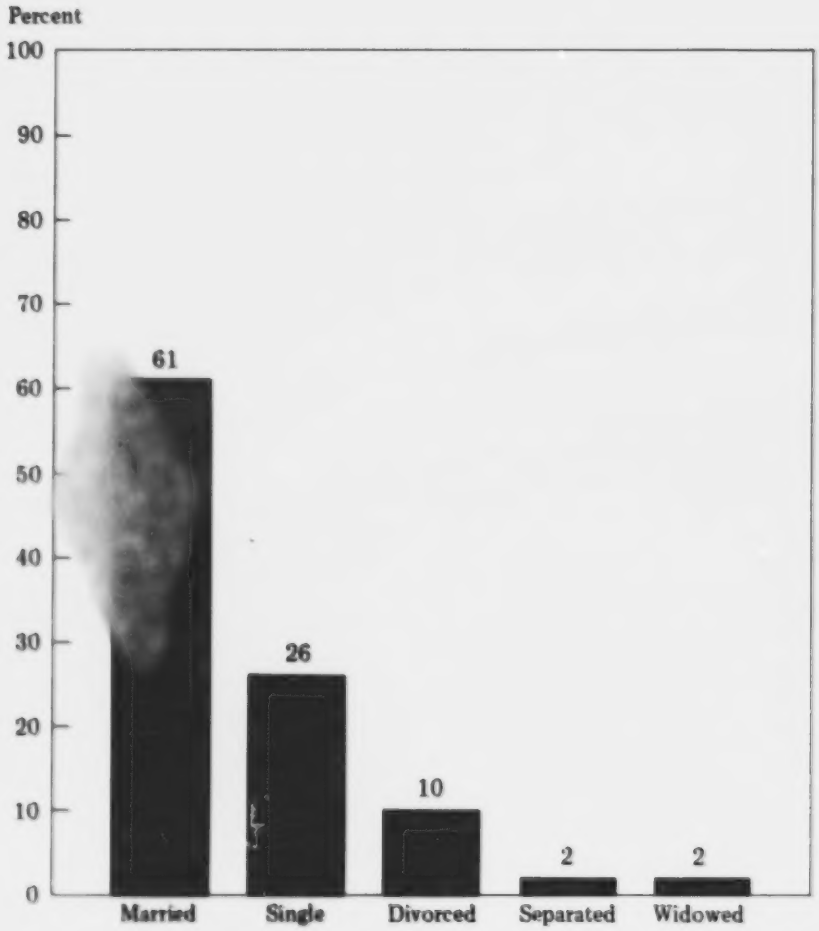
- A heavy majority of adult students are married – about 60 percent – and an additional 15 percent have been married.
- Only about 25 percent have never been married.

Interpretation

- The match between the marital status of adult students and that of the adult population is mixed:

Marital Status	Percentage of nation's adult population	Percentage of nation's adult students
Married	63	61
Single	16	26
Divorced/ Separated	9	12
Widowed	12	2

- Married adults produce their fair share of adult learners; single adults produce twice their share; the divorced produce more than their share; the widowed produce far less than their share. Age may be the operative influence both for the single adults and for the widowed.
- Being busy with family responsibilities does not make college study impossible, although it may make it difficult.
- Single men, and perhaps single women even more so, are freer to study, are younger, and in some cases are still being financially supported by their parents. Thus, they are in the best circumstances for college study.
- Divorced or separated adults, especially divorced or separated women, are often undergoing significant life transitions. College study is one way to find a new direction.
- Widowed adults, especially widowed women, have often reached an age at which their lives have ceased to change. While learning is always an option for them, it is seldom an obligation.



Marital Status

4. Race and Ethnic Background

Observation

- White adults dominate the adult learning market, constituting about 90 percent of all students.
- No other single group constitutes a significant part of the market in terms of its size.

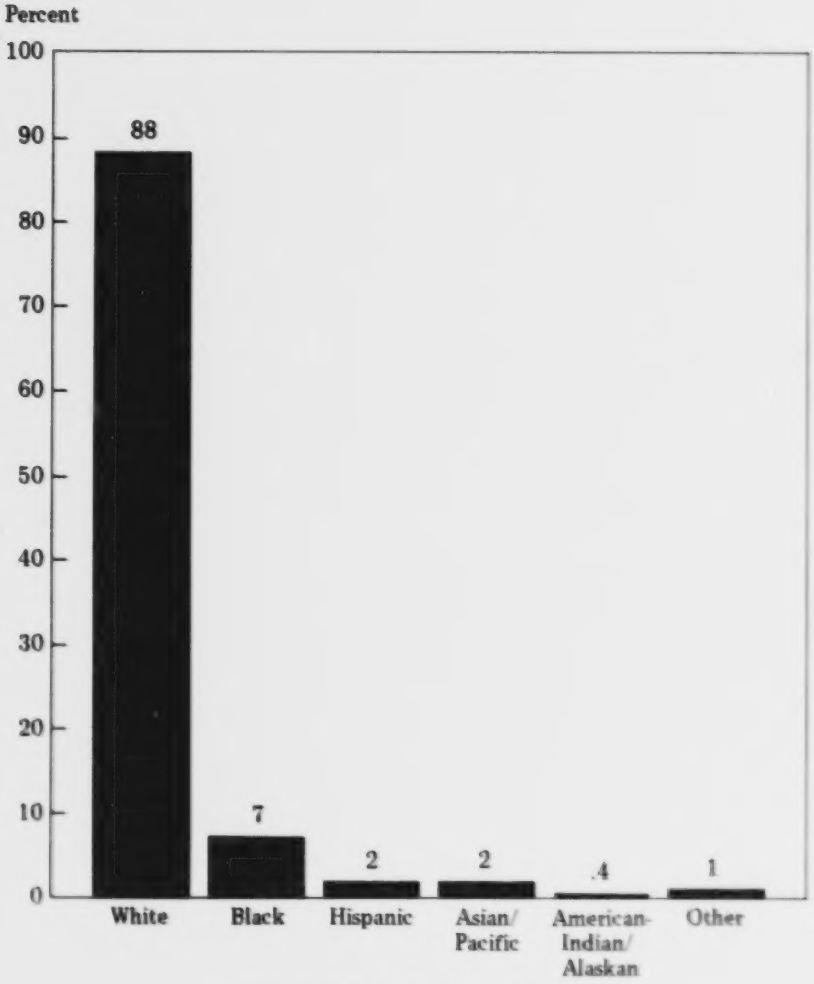
Interpretation

- White adults are overrepresented in college classrooms in proportion to their numbers in the population, and all other adults are underrepresented.

Group	Relative size of white, black, and Hispanic populations in the nation	Relative size of white, black, and Hispanic adult student populations in the nation*
White	85	91
Black	10	7
Hispanic	5	2

- Colleges do not enroll young blacks and Hispanics immediately after high school in proportion to their numbers in the population; they are even less successful in enrolling adult blacks and Hispanics in proportion to their numbers in the population.
- Unlike women adults, black and Hispanic adults are not making up the college study they did not undertake when they were younger.
- Colleges are not using effective techniques for recruiting adult blacks and Hispanics to their campuses.
- Black and Hispanic adults do not see the benefits of college – especially in proportion to costs – to the extent that white adults do.
- Black and Hispanic adults do not themselves have the financial means for college study to the same extent as white adults, and they are less able to obtain it from their employers.

**The percentages shown in this table were recomputed from the chart on the opposite page, using only data for white, black, and Hispanic students.*



Race and Ethnic Background

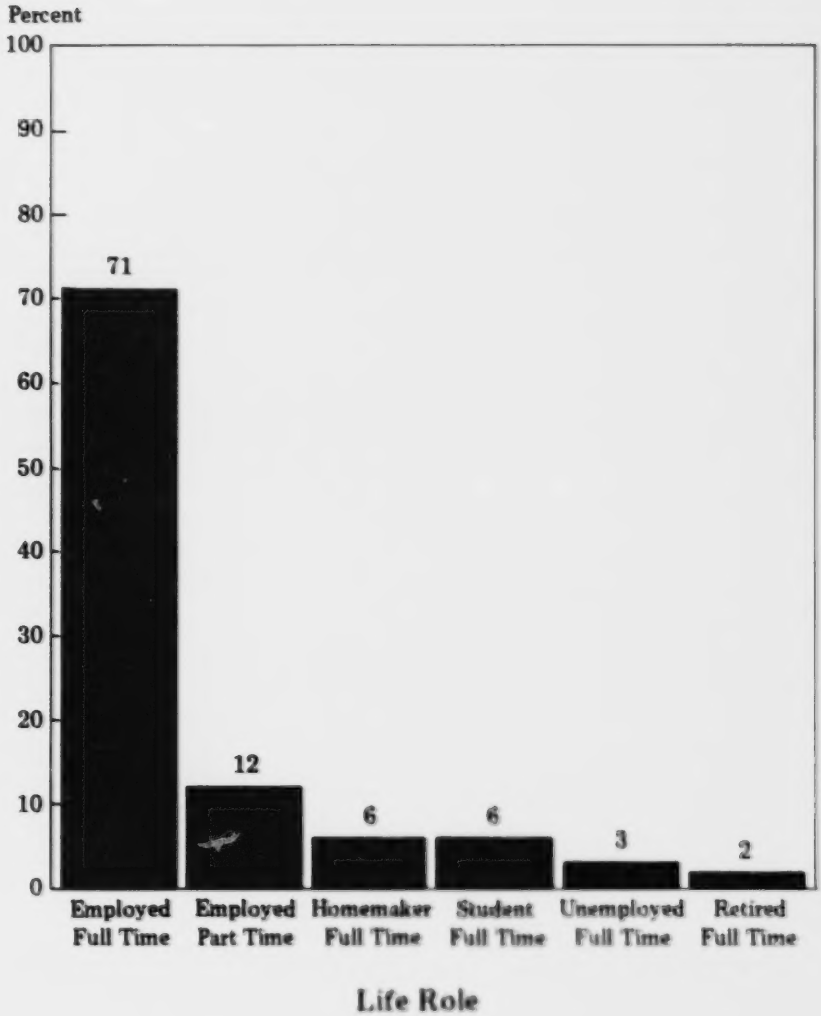
5. Life Role

Observation

- An overwhelming majority of adult students work, and most work full time, outside or inside the home.
- Significantly, the unemployed – who make up about 6 percent of the nation's labor force – make up about half that fraction of adult students.
- The retired, on the other hand, do not appear on college campuses in anything approaching their proportions in the adult population.

Interpretation

- Although only about 5 percent call themselves full-time students, approximately 25 percent reported that they take 12 or more credit hours per semester. This means that some 20 percent of all adult students are combining a full-time study load with other responsibilities.
- Even full-time employment, outside or inside the home, does not prevent college study, although it may make it more difficult.
- On the other hand, working may make college study more feasible, even if more difficult. Some 40 percent of those who work reported receiving financial assistance from their employers for college study.
- The contrast between the very large proportion who work and the very large proportion who are retired is particularly striking. College credit study does not have much appeal for the latter. They have the time but not the inclination. Their lives have stabilized to the point that, while study is still an opportunity, it is no longer an obligation.
- Most adult students are very busy people, juggling work, family, and study. Their desire for useful and convenient programs is fully understandable.


Percent
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
71
12
6
6
3
2
Employed Full Time
Employed Part Time
Homemaker Full Time
Student Full Time
Unemployed Full Time
Retired Full Time
Life Role

6. Education

Observation

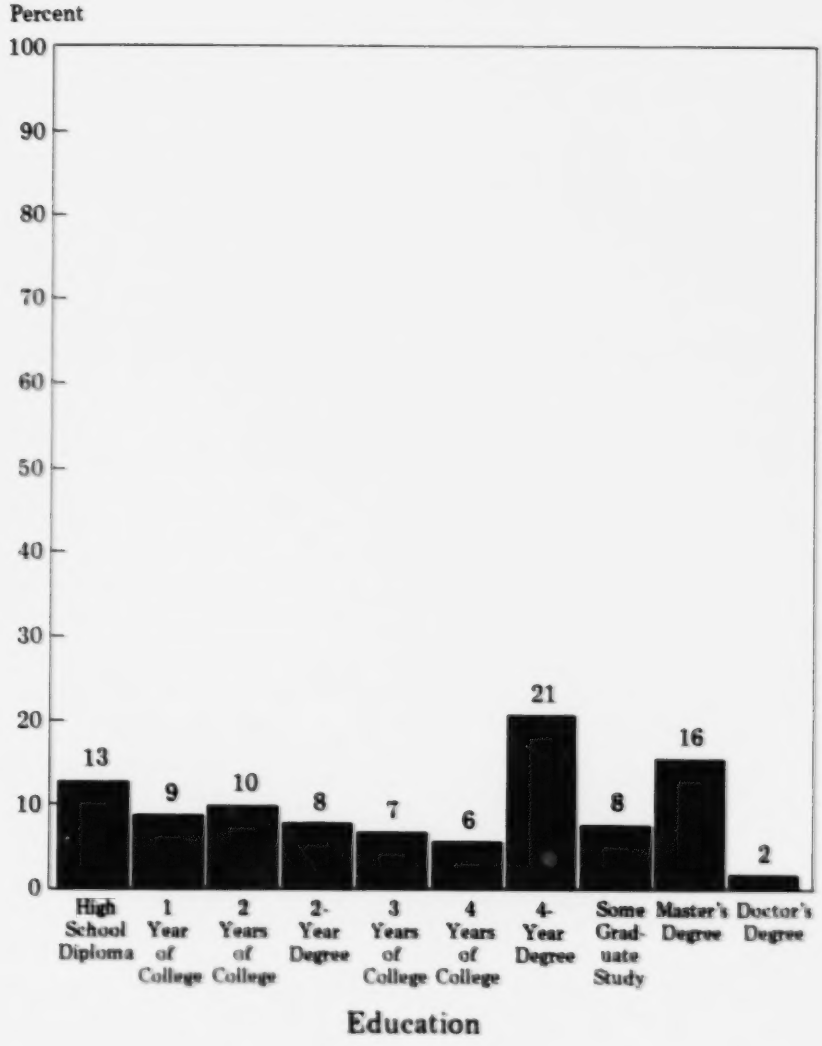
- Adult students are extremely well educated
  - Most have already been to college – about 85 percent.
  - About half have completed at least four years of college.
  - An impressive minority of adult students – about 25 percent – have undertaken graduate work, and a large majority of the 25 percent hold a graduate degree.

Interpretation

- Adult students are far better educated than the general population of adults:

Level of Education	Percentage of nation's adult population	Percentage of nation's adult students
Elementary school: 0-8	16	0
High school: 9-12	44	13
College: 1-3 years	19	34
College: 4 years or more	22	53

- While about 60 percent of all adults have only a high school education or less, the same is true of only about 15 percent of all adult learners.
- While only about 20 percent of all adults have earned four years of college credit or more, about 50 percent of all adult students have done so, and most of them have earned a bachelor's or master's degree.
- Previous studies of adult learners have repeatedly shown that better-educated people continue to get more education. This study is simply another confirmation of established fact.
- The more an adult has studied, the more likely that adult is to study again.
- Explanations of this pattern vary, but it seems probable that educated adults are undergoing changes in their lives, particularly in their careers, which makes continuing study either a necessity or an opportunity to achieve greater success.


Percent
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
13
9
10
8
7
6
21
8
16
2
High School Diploma
1 Year of College
2 Years of College
2-Year Degree
3 Years of College
4 Years of College
4-Year Degree
Some Graduate Study
Master's Degree
Doctor's Degree
Education

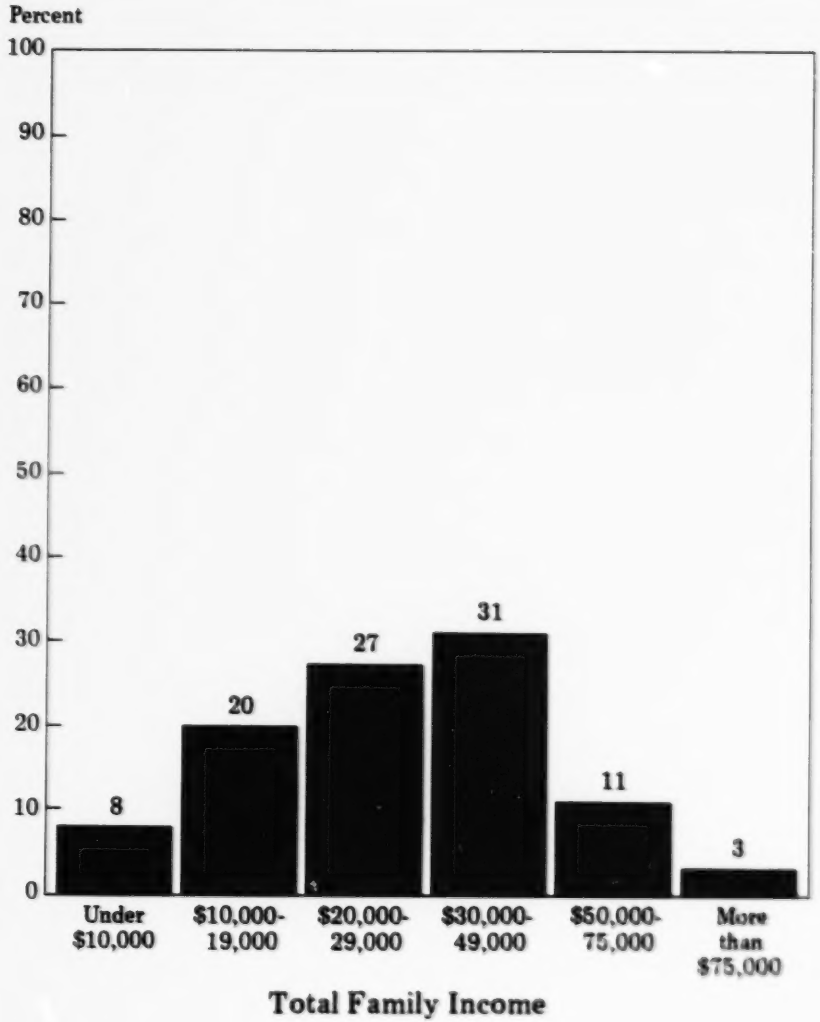
7. Total Family Income

Observation

- Adult students come from homes with a 1984 median family income of about $27,500 a year.
- Almost twice as many come from families earning $50,000 a year or more as from families earning less than $10,000 a year.

Interpretation

- Although adult students' families have a median income that is approximately the national average, those incomes stretch farther above that median than below it, skewing their income distribution toward the high end of the range.
- This repeats the pattern for the level of education of those adults who continue to study: they are more fortunate in both respects than the remainder of the population.
- The pattern of above-average incomes for adult students' families has surfaced in previous studies, not surprisingly. Income is correlated with level of education, and inasmuch as income is higher than average for adult learners, education can also be expected to be higher.
- As has been shown in earlier investigations, the higher an adult's income, the more likely that adult is to study.
- Just as with the correlation between level of education and persistence in study as an adult, the correlation between level of income and persistence in study as an adult has been given various explanations. As with highly educated adults, it seems likely that high-income adults live in worlds of above-average challenge and change and that continuous study helps them cope.
- While many adult students have incomes high enough to pay their own way through college, many others cannot undertake college study unless they have outside financial assistance from the government, their employers, or elsewhere.


Percent
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
8
20
27
31
11
3
Under $10,000
$10,000-19,000
$20,000-29,000
$30,000-49,000
$50,000-75,000
More than $75,000
Total Family Income

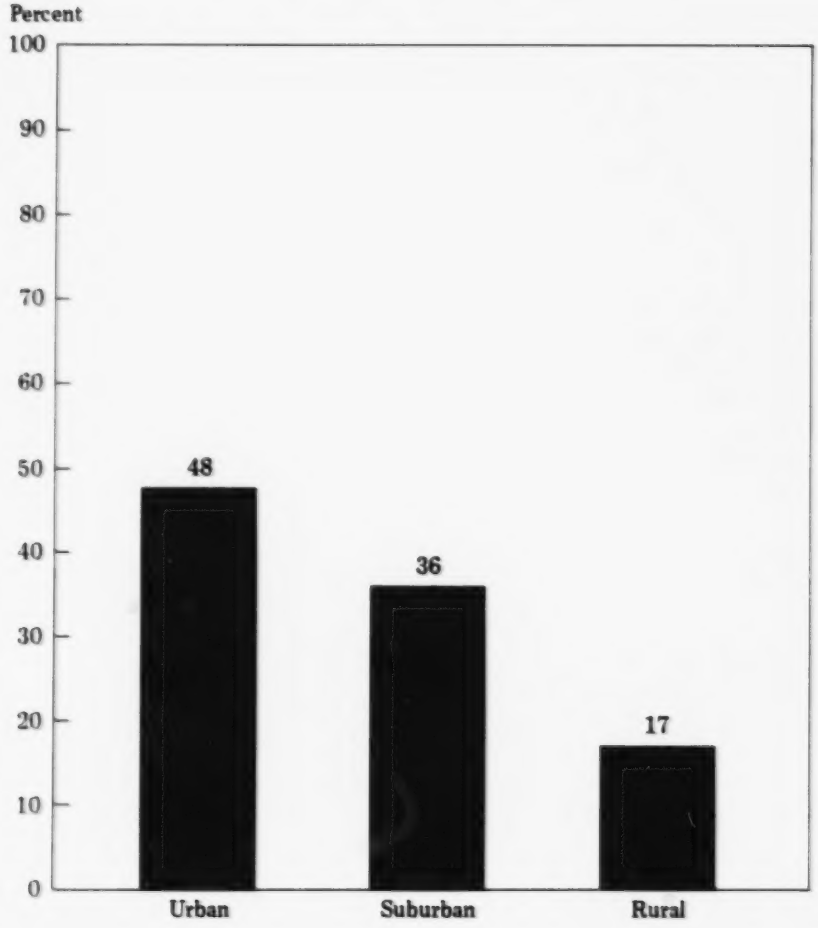
8. Area of Residence

Observation

- About 50 percent of adult students live in cities, about 35 percent in suburbs, and about 15 percent in rural areas.
- Cities contain as many adult students as suburban and rural areas combined.

Interpretation

- The distribution of adult learning follows the pattern of the nation's adult population, but not perfectly. Only 75 percent of all adults live in metropolitan areas (urban and suburban combined), but almost 85 percent of adult learners live in metropolitan areas. Almost 25 percent of all adults live in rural areas, but only about 15 percent of adult learners live in rural areas.
- Adults who have the drive to climb life's ladders, including the parallel learning ladder, may gravitate to metropolitan areas.
- Life may be more turbulent in cities and suburbs than in small towns, on farms and ranches, and in villages, causing more life transitions that stimulate or require adults to learn.
- Jobs in metropolitan areas may require more education than jobs in rural areas.
- The more education adults have, the more likely they are to study. Better-educated adults may be concentrated in cities and suburbs.
- Colleges may be more numerous in metropolitan areas in proportion to the population, making college study more accessible to adults.
- Metropolitan colleges may seek adult students more actively than rural colleges.
- Whatever the reasons, it is easier for colleges in metropolitan areas to attract adult students than colleges in rural areas.



Area of Residence

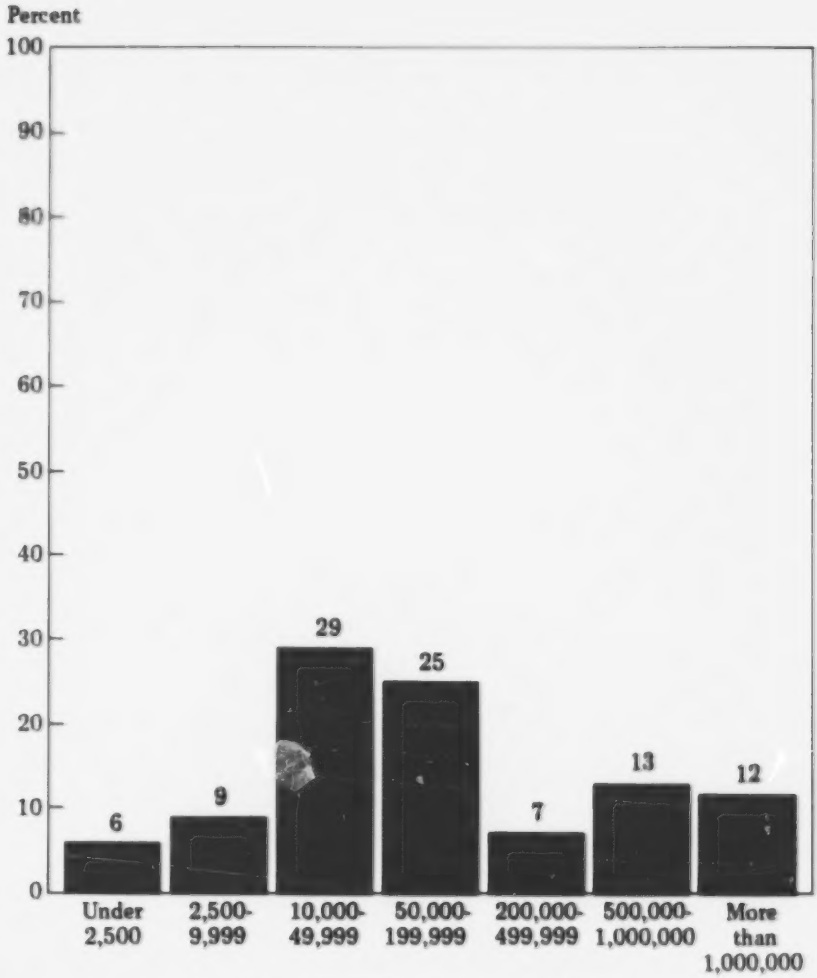
9. Population of Place of Residence

Observation

- Most adult students live in towns and medium-sized cities. About half of them live in places with populations ranging from 10,000 to 200,000.
- About as many adult students live in small towns with under 10,000 people or in even less populated rural areas as live in massive cities with more than a million people.

Interpretation

- The shape of adult learning takes on the general shape of the adult population. The growth of the population in outlying areas has meant the growth of adult students in outlying areas. The great suburban rings, the cities of the Southeast and Southwest, and even the semi-rural areas across the nation, are growing.
- The shape of adult learning takes on the shape of the employed population. The migration of jobs from the massive cities to outlying areas has meant the parallel migration of demand from employers for an educated work force.



Population of Place of Residence

This part of the report first describes degree study among adult students. It then describes the study patterns of adult degree and nondegree students combined. The following are the aspects of adult study that were examined:

Degree Study Only

- Extent of degree study
- Type of degree
- Field of study for degree
- Time of study for a degree
- Transfer of credit toward a degree
- Plans for completing degree at current college

Adult Degree and Nondegree Students Combined

- Public or private college
- Two-year college or four-year college
- Reasons for choosing a college
- Undergraduate or graduate study
- Fields of study for courses
- Number of credit courses taken per year
- Number of credits taken per semester
- Number of credits earned per course
- Classes taught by regular or adjunct faculty members
- Size of classes
- Length of courses
- Length of class sessions
- Weekly schedule of classes
- Beginning time of day or evening classes
- Place of study
- Travel time to class
- Travel to class from home or work

Adult Degree and Nondegree Students Combined

(continued)

- Cost of courses
- Financial help from employers
- Most wanted services
- Moderately wanted services
- Least wanted services
- How college could have improved life for students

Degree Study Only

44

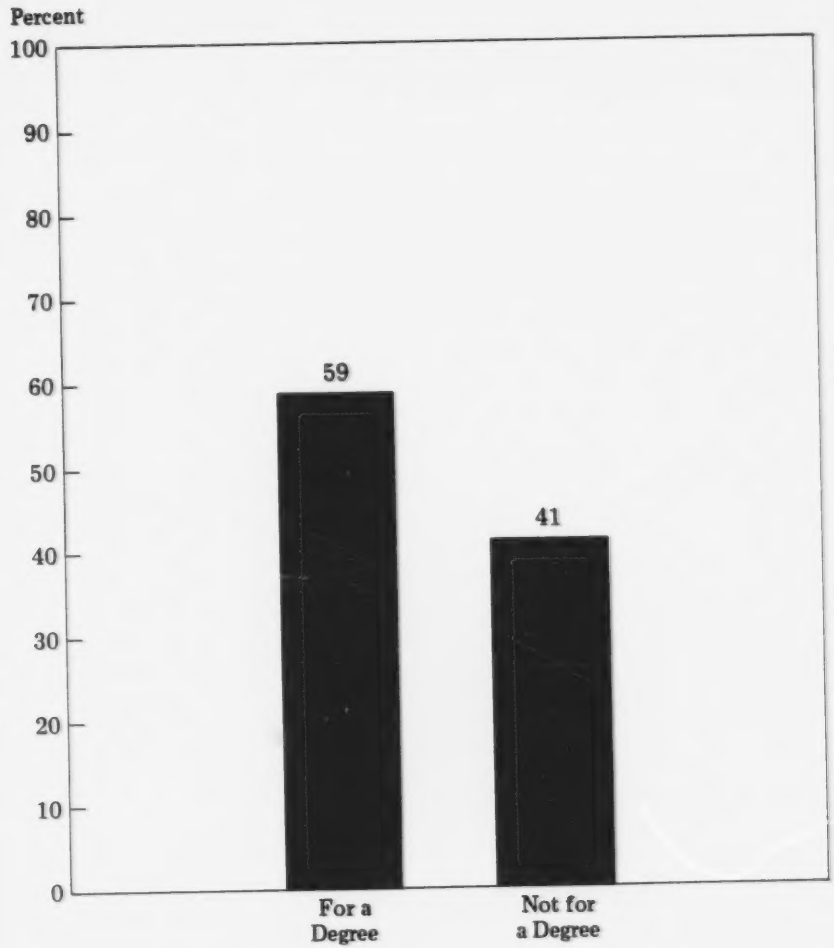
10. Extent of Degree Study

Observation

- Most adults are seeking degrees: about 60 percent are enrolled in degree programs.
- The 40 percent of adults who are not seeking degrees constitute a substantial number of students.

Interpretation

- If degree study is serious study, most adult students are serious.
- Many adults can accomplish their educational objectives without earning degrees.
- Many adults not now studying for degrees may undertake degree study at some time in the future.



Extent of Degree Study

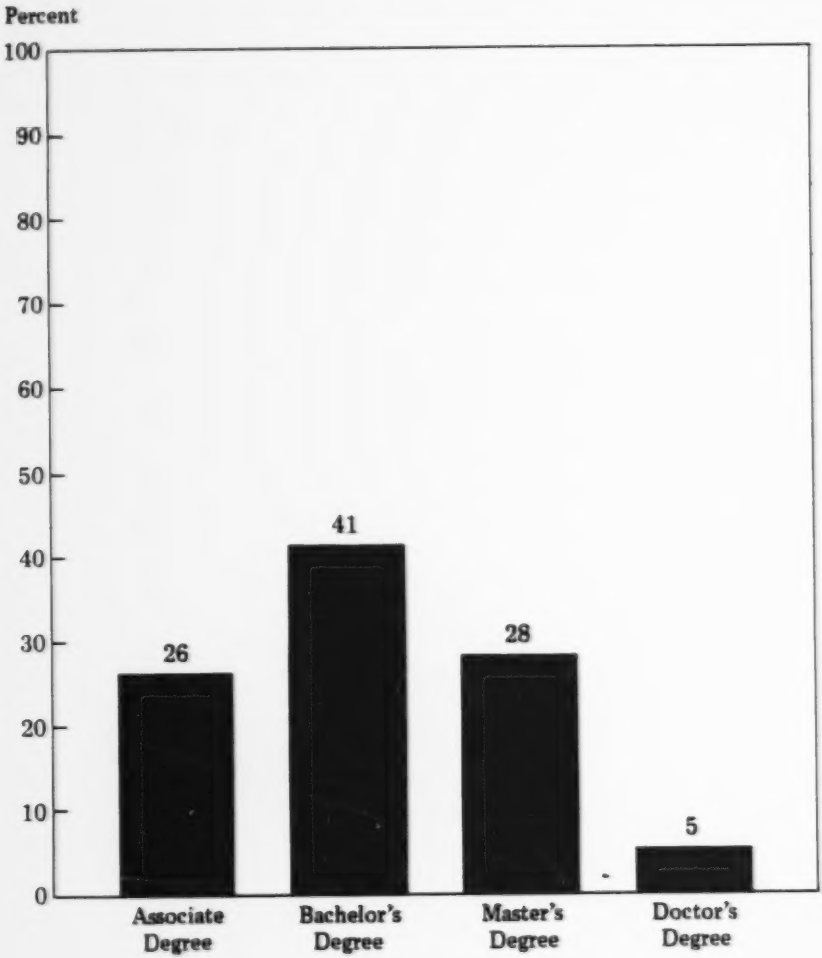
11. Type of Degree

Observation

- More adults seek bachelor's degrees than any other degree.
- About one-third of all adult degree students are engaged in graduate study, most of them seeking a master's degree.

Interpretation

- These results explain why four-year colleges enroll twice as many adults as two-year colleges.
- The higher proportion of adults who seek a bachelor's degree include those adults who acquired associate degrees earlier.
- Adults are willing to study longer to acquire the benefits – economic, social, or otherwise – of a four-year degree.
- Most graduate study is professional study, which is particularly attractive to the older, career-minded adult student.
- Adults constitute the lion's share of graduate students.


Percent
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
26
41
28
5
Associate Degree
Bachelor's Degree
Master's Degree
Doctor's Degree
Type of Degree

12. Field of Study for Degree

Observation

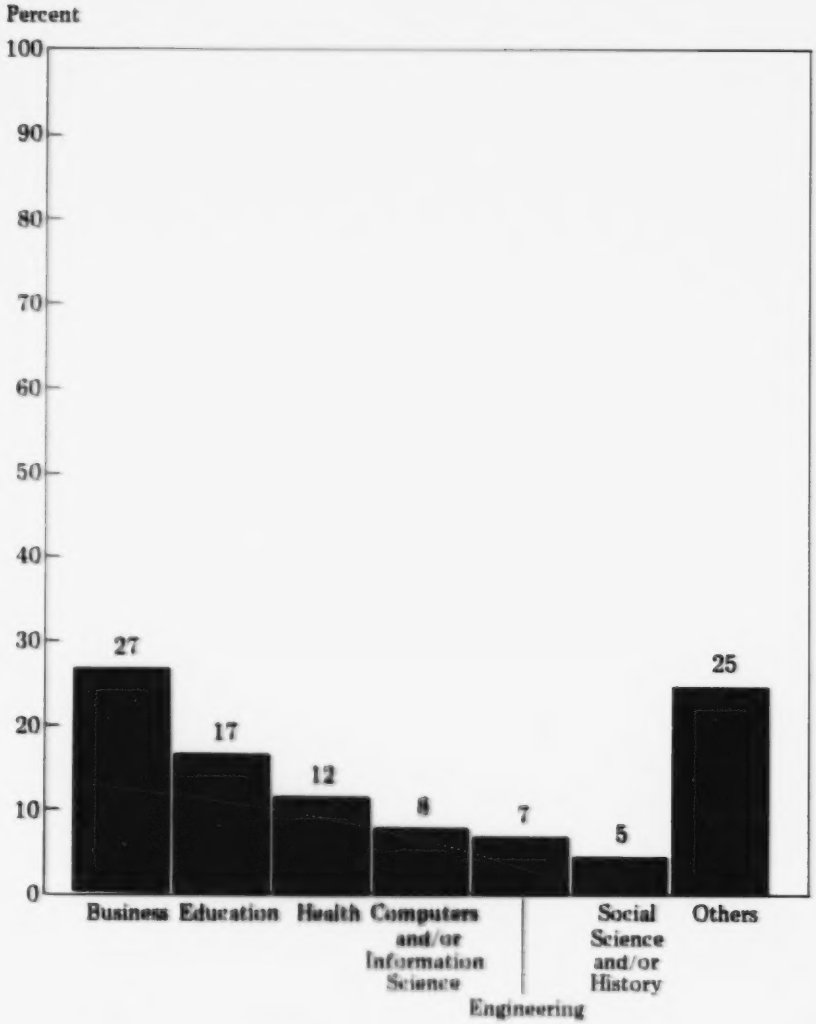
- About 65 percent of the fields of study for degrees selected by adults are concentrated in only five career areas:

Career field	Approximate percentages
Business	25
Education	15
Health	10
Computer Science and/or Information Science	10
Engineering	5

- The 30 percent who do not choose one of the top five career fields scatter their choices over 16 other subject areas, almost half of which are in other career fields.
- Over 80 percent of the adults studying for degrees are taking them in career fields.

Interpretation

- Most adults seek degrees that have immediate utility. They deposit their learning into a checking account – not into a savings account – so that they can draw on it without delay. To most adults, learning is a liquid resource, not a long-term capital investment.
- Most adults learn in order to cope with some transition in their lives. Moving into a new job, adapting to a change in job, advancing in a career are the specific changes that require many adults to learn something new. While many of these transitions are voluntary, some are not. Many adults want to learn, others have to learn in order to get their jobs, keep them, or advance beyond them. More adults cite career transitions than any other as their reason for learning.
- The best way to explain what adults learn is to point to how they spend their time. Occupation topics dominate adult learning because occupational matters dominate adult living.



Field of Study for Degree

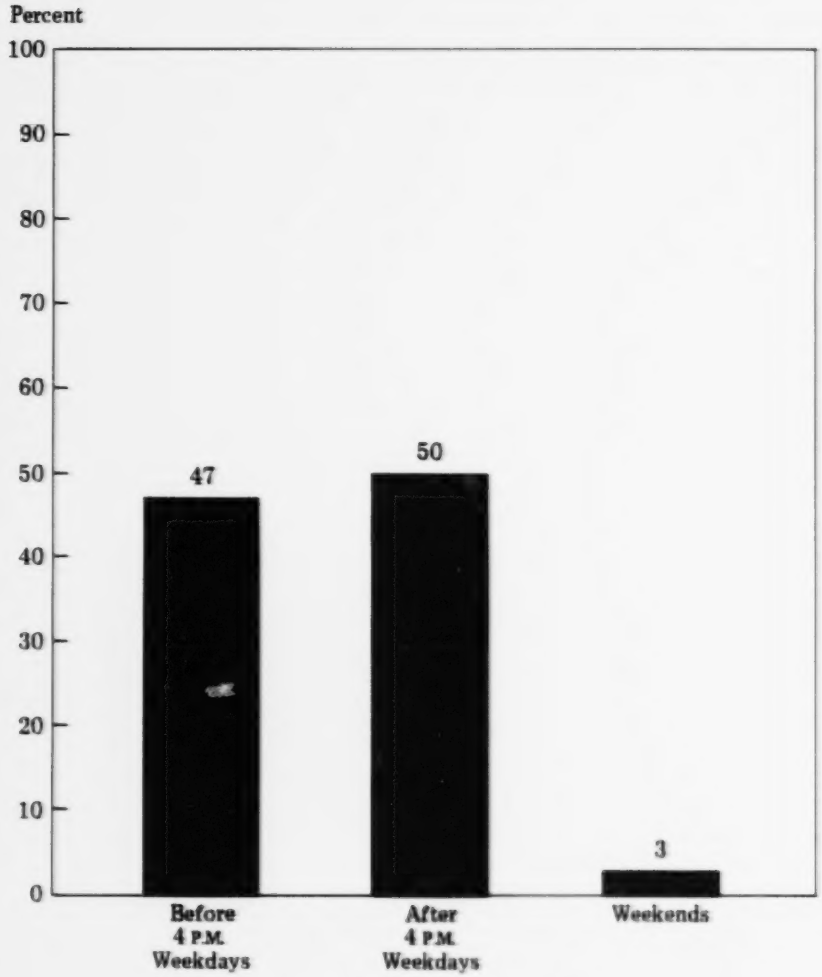
13. Time of Study for a Degree

Observation

- "Adult school" and "night school" are no longer synonymous for adult degree students. They are as likely to study during the day as at night.
- Almost half of all adult degree students take most of their courses during the day.
- Weekend study for degrees is rare among adults, despite the existence of noteworthy weekend degree programs designed explicitly to attract adults to college campuses.

Interpretation

- Many adults seeking degrees are unwilling to stretch their study over the years needed to earn a degree through evening study.
- Many adults choose to study during the day and work at night, rather than the reverse.
- Not all colleges offer degrees through evening study.
- Almost all adult students keep their weekends for themselves.



Time of Study for a Degree

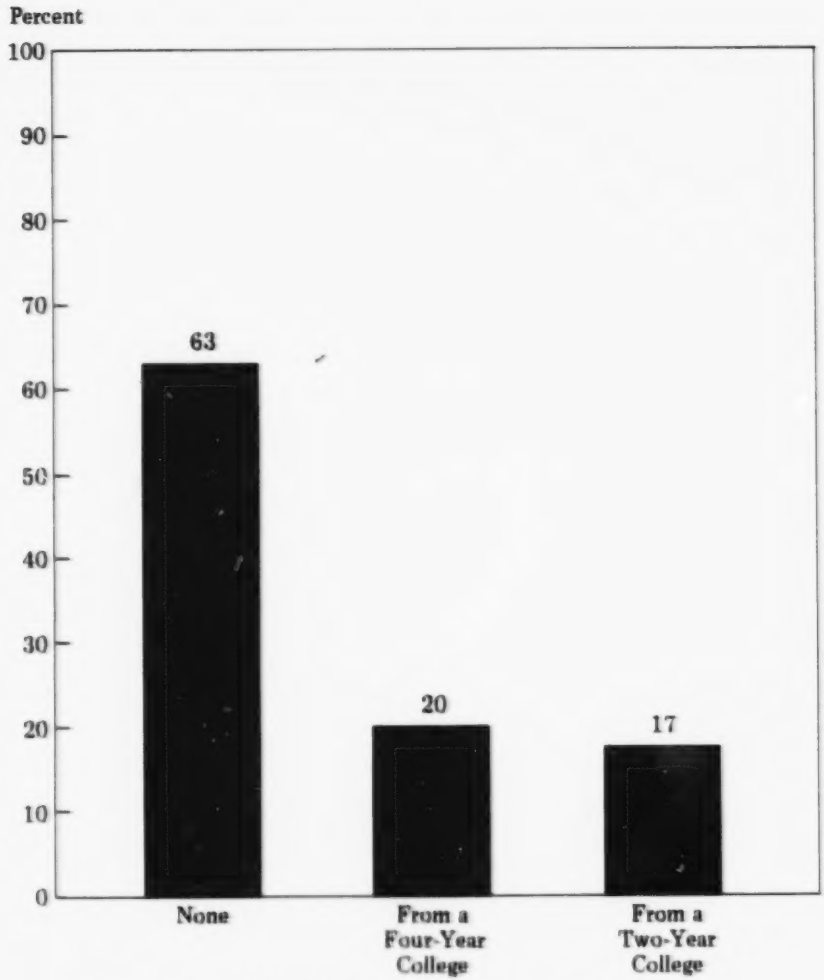
14. Transfer of Credit Toward a Degree

Observation

- Most adults earn all their credit toward a degree at one college.
- About 35 percent of adult degree students studied somewhere else first.
- Adults are just as likely to transfer credits from a four-year college as from a two-year college.

Interpretation

- Adults seeking degrees prefer to take all their courses at a single college.
- Once they select a college, unless they become dissatisfied or their life circumstances change, they will persist at the same college.
- Even if adults do not attend continuously, they will return to the same college to pursue a degree.
- Some adults begin degrees but do not persist long enough to become transfer students.
- Constraints that college policies place on the transfer of credit toward degree programs reinforce the natural loyalty adults feel toward the colleges they have chosen.
- Constraints on the transfer of credit within graduate programs – where one-third of the adults are enrolled – are even greater.



Transfer of Credit Toward a Degree

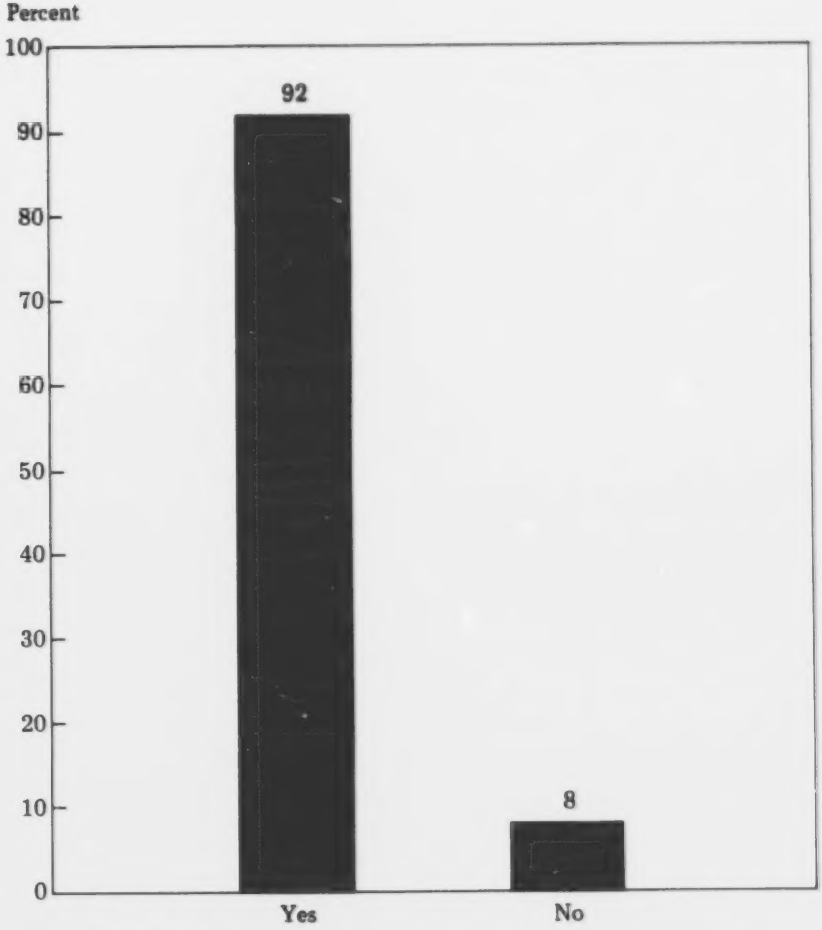
15. Plans for Completing a Degree at Current College

Observation

- Once they matriculate for a degree at a college, almost all adult students plan to complete the degree at that college.

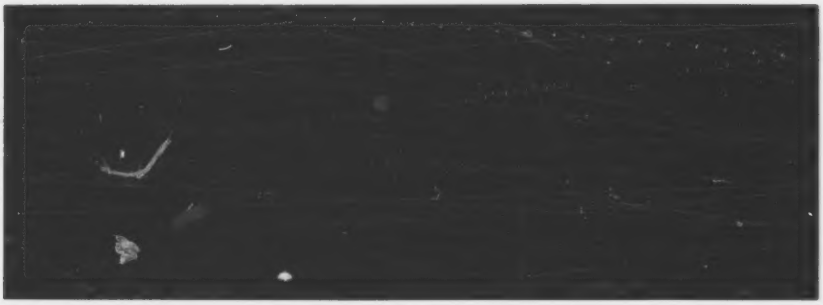
Interpretation

- Adult degree students do not want to transfer from their present colleges. Having put hard thought into the choice of a college for a degree, they expect that choice to be stable.
- College policies placed on the transfer of credit toward degree programs, particularly for graduate students, reinforces the plans of adult degree students to stay where they are.



Plans for Completing Degree at Current College

Adult Degree and Nondegree Students Combined



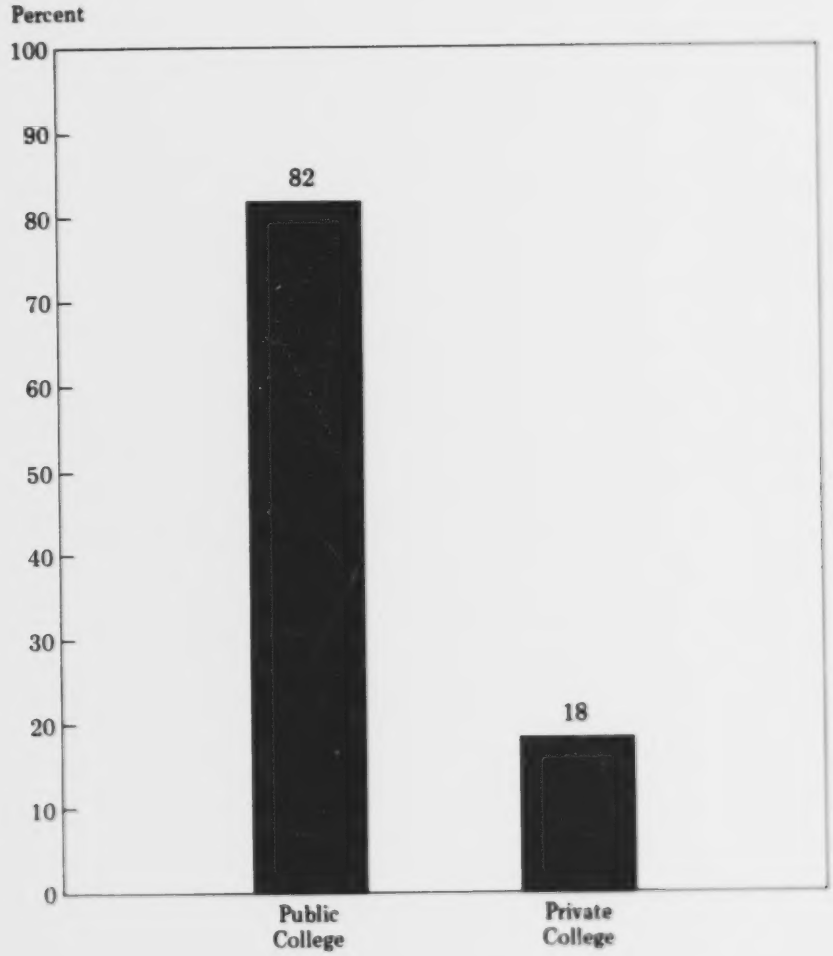
16. Public or Private College

Observation

- Adult students are far more likely to attend public colleges than private colleges. Over 80 percent elect public institutions.

Interpretation

- There are slightly more private colleges than public colleges in the nation, but the private colleges are usually smaller. As a consequence, public colleges enroll about 75 percent of all credit students. Adult students follow this overall pattern, but not perfectly: a slightly larger proportion attends public colleges.
- Adult students presumably have reasons similar to those of traditional students for choosing public colleges: convenience, cost, and career curricula, among others, but adult students hold to these reasons more firmly.



Public or Private College

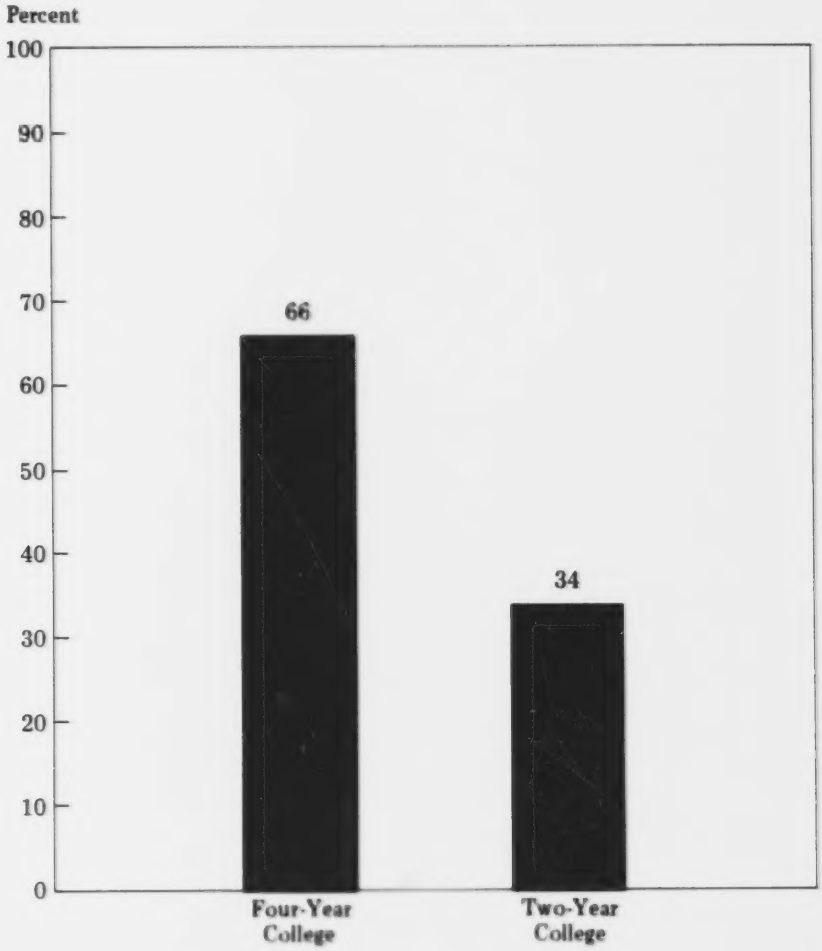
17. Two-Year College or Four-Year College

Observation

- Twice as many adults study at four-year colleges as at two-year colleges – about 65 percent – as compared to about 35 percent.
- This pattern is as true for degree students as for nondegree students.

Interpretation

- Four-year colleges enroll almost 65 percent of all credit students of any age. Adult students generally follow this overall pattern.
- The one-third of adults who are graduate students produces disproportionately more adult enrollments at four-year colleges than at two-year colleges.



Two-Year College or Four-Year College

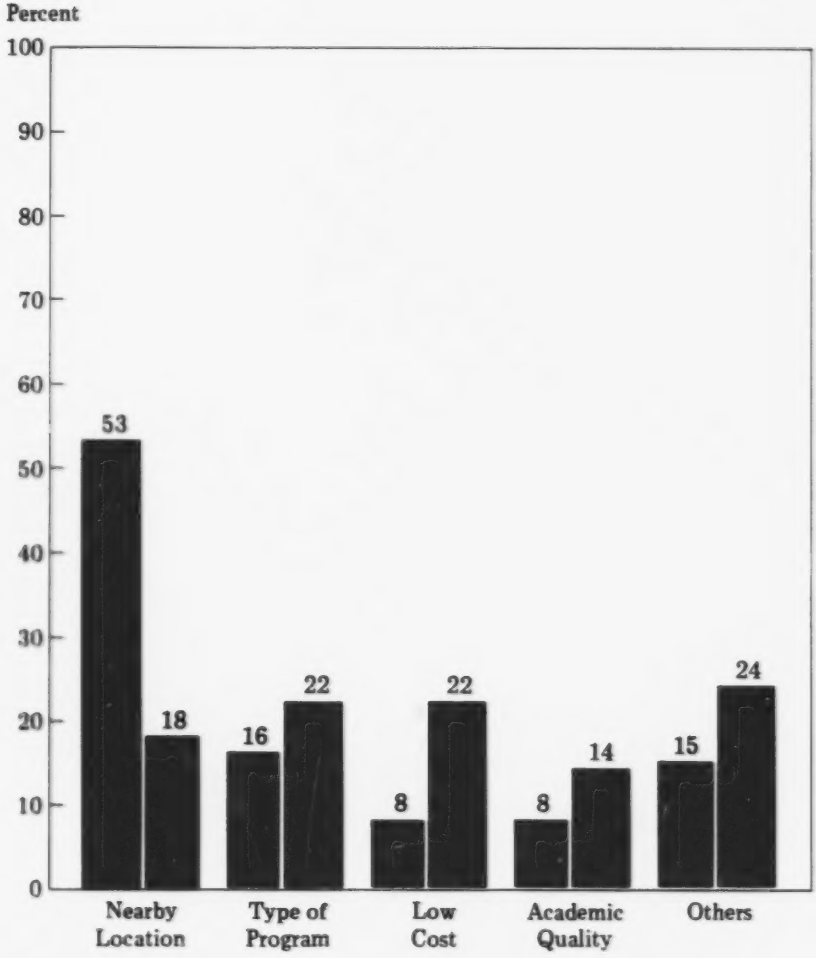
18. Reasons for Choosing a College

Observation

- Convenient location means the most to adults when choosing a college – 70 percent give it as a reason.
- Only about 40 percent of adults cite the curriculum, 30 percent the cost, and 20 percent the academic quality.

Interpretation

- Adult students have so many other obligations that they cannot, and certainly they will not, travel to distant colleges to study. Therefore, nearby location is more than a desirable attribute of a college – it is a decisive attribute.
- Type of program is next in importance because it is the utility of the learning that brings adults to the campus.
- Although cost is important to adults, most of whom are financially self-supporting, utility overrides cost because a useful, saleable education will return its cost many times over, even in the short term.
- Academic quality is cited less often by adults as a reason for selecting a college for two reasons:
  - Quality cannot override the other reasons. A distant, expensive, liberal-arts program of extremely high quality cannot compete with a nearby, inexpensive, career program.
  - Neither the adult who buys the program nor the employer to which he or she sells the results can judge program quality.
- Adults can more easily assess the location, program offerings, and costs of colleges than they can assess the academic quality of those colleges.
- Adults may simply assume the academic quality of the institutions they decide to attend.



Reasons for Choosing a College

19. Undergraduate or Graduate Study

Observation

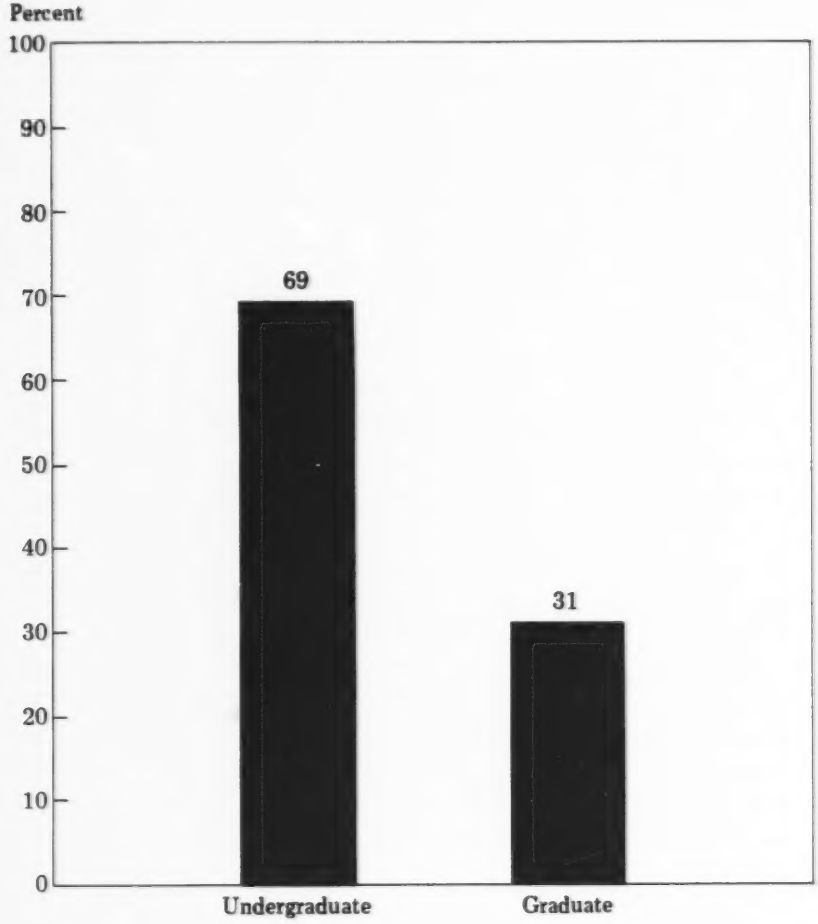
- More than twice as many adults are engaged in undergraduate study as in graduate study: about 70 percent in contrast to about 30 percent.

Interpretation

- The proportions of all undergraduate and graduate enrollment in colleges nationwide are quite different from those for adult students alone. The national figures are:

Level	Percentage of total enrollment
Undergraduate	87
Graduate	13

- Adult students are far more likely to be engaged in graduate study than traditional students. This is in keeping with the fact that adult students are already highly educated, as has been demonstrated repeatedly by earlier research. Over half of the adults chosen at random for this study had four or more years of college when they were interviewed.



Undergraduate or Graduate Study

20. Fields of Study for Courses

Observation

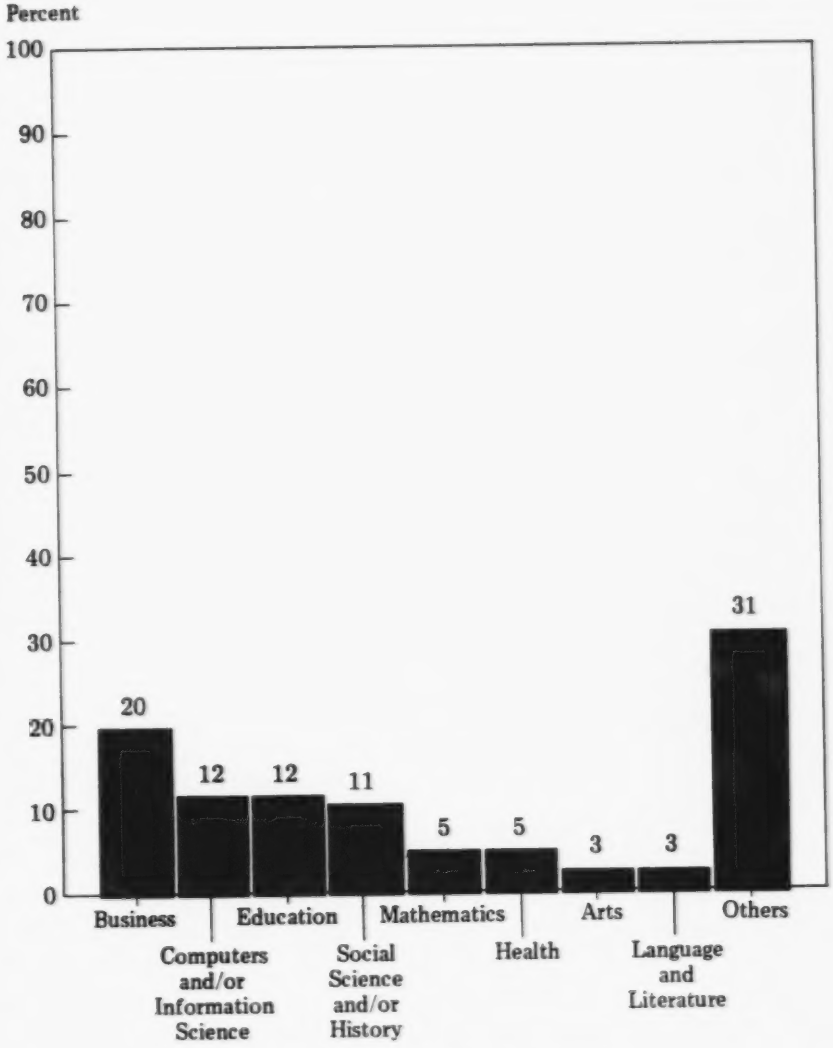
- About 70 percent of the courses taken by adults are in career fields.
- About 50 percent of the courses taken by adults are concentrated in only four career fields:

Career field	Approximate percentages
Business	20
Computer Science and/or Information Science	10
Education	10
Health	5

- The 50 percent who do not take courses in one of the top four career fields scatter their choices over 16 other subject areas, almost half of which are in other career fields.

Interpretation

- Just as with their study for degrees, most adults take career courses that have immediate utility, whether they are taken as part of degree programs or as individual courses. The explanation is the same for the courses as for the degrees: career transitions dominate adult lives and career courses dominate adult study.



Fields of Study for Courses

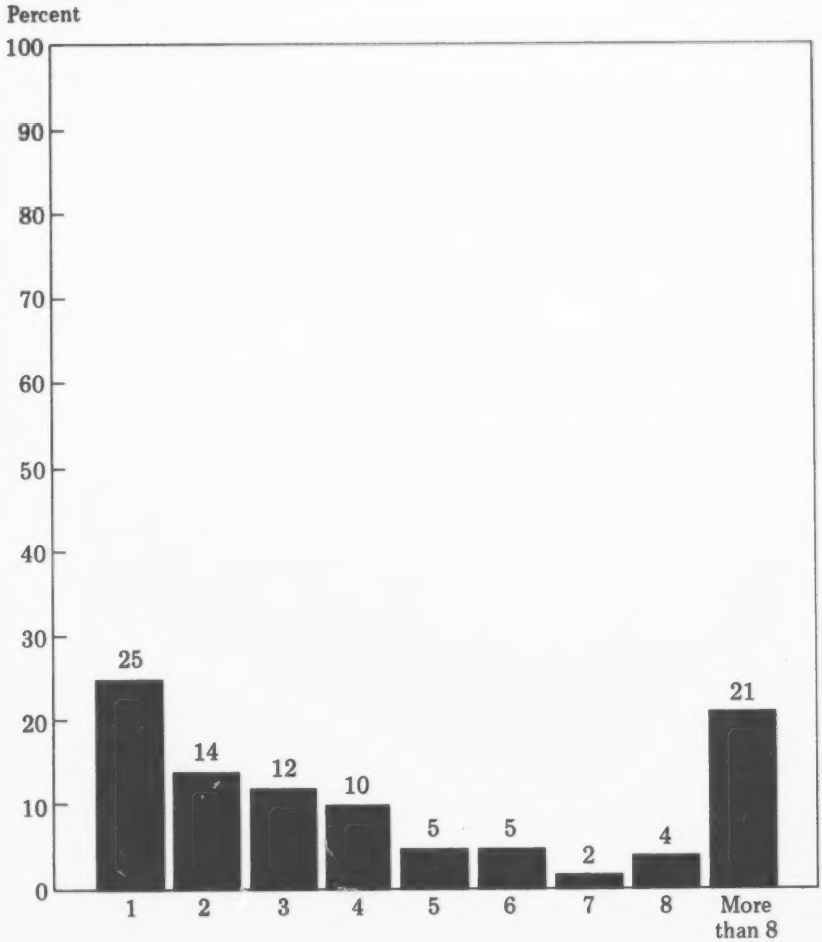
21. Number of Credit Courses Taken per Year

Observation

- About 25 percent of all adult students study full time.
- About 25 percent of all adult students take only one course a year.
- 50 percent of all adult students fall between these two extremes, most of them at the lower end, with about 25 percent taking only two or three courses in a typical year.

Interpretation

- As busy as adults are while balancing their roles as workers, family members, and students, a remarkable proportion find time to attend college full time.
- Almost half of all students now attend college only part time, a phenomenon attributable partly to the 75 percent of all adult students who attend part time.
- As the adult proportion of college enrollment continues to rise, the proportion of part-time college students can be expected to follow suit.



Number of Credit Courses Taken per Year

63

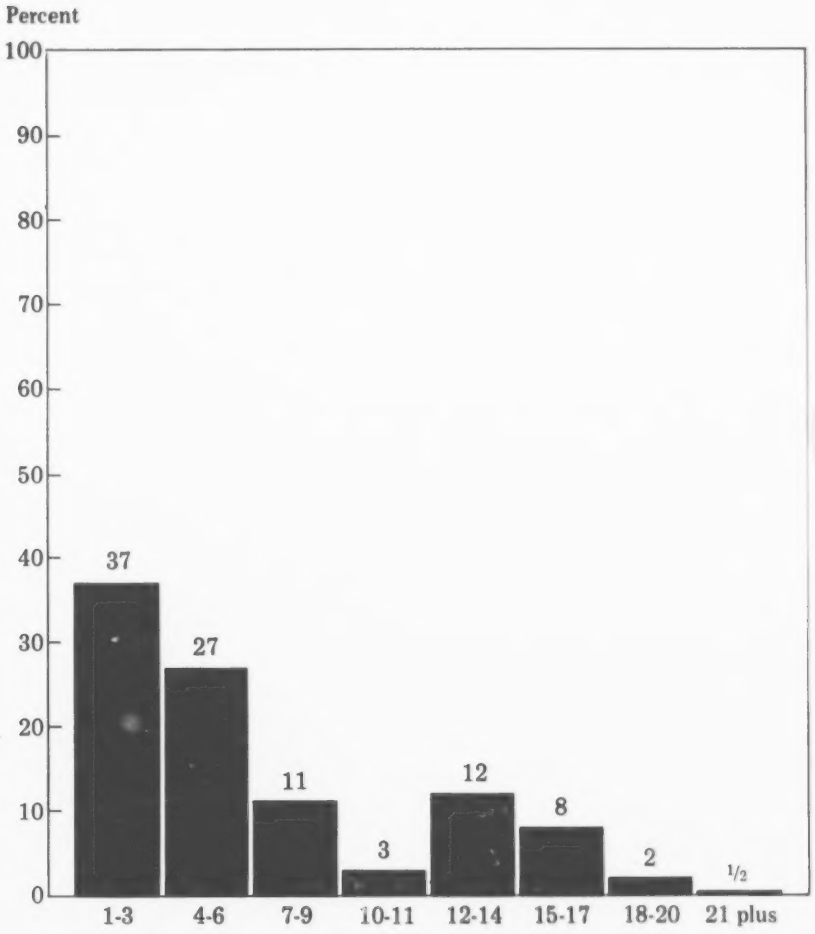
22. Number of Credits Taken per Semester

Observation

- While many adults (about 35 percent) take courses one at a time, almost as many (about 25 percent) take two at a time.
- The remaining 40 percent of adults take three or more courses simultaneously in the span of a single semester.

Interpretation

- The widely held belief that a college needs three or four adult students to equal the revenue produced by one traditional student is not supported by these findings. The data collected here suggest that, inasmuch as the typical adult earns five credits per semester, it takes only two-and-a-half adult students to equal the revenue produced by one traditional student.
- Admittedly, two-and-a-half adult students may not produce as much revenue as one traditional student, depending on such factors as differentiated tuition charges and state financing formulas. And the cost to the college of serving two-and-a-half adult students may exceed the cost of serving one traditional student.
- Still, it may cost less to recruit, advise, house, protect, and sponsor social events and sports activities for adult students than for traditional students. Indeed, it may be that full-time adult students produce as much revenue but require fewer services than full-time traditional students, making adults more attractive financially.
- Easy generalizations about the effect of adult students on college finances should give way to firm cost analyses prepared by individual colleges.



Number of Credits Taken per Semester

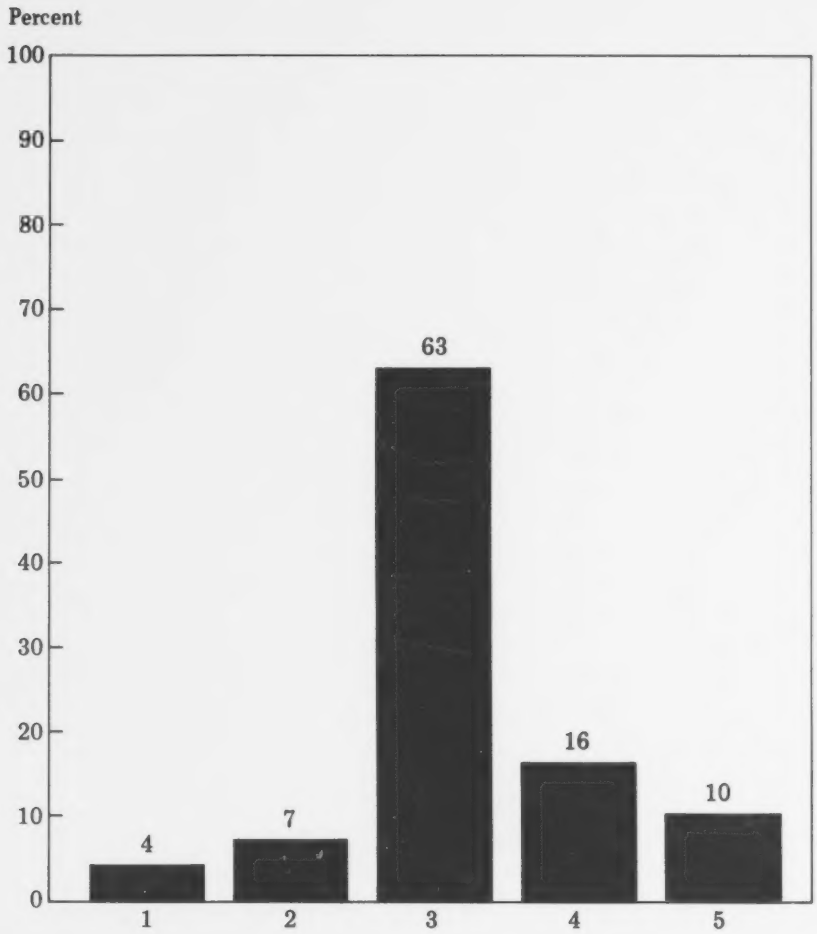
23. Number of Credits Earned per Course

Observation

- About two-thirds of all adult students fit their study into the traditional credit-course framework.
- While the three-credit course continues to be the standard, there is a range across which some courses yield five times as much credit as others.
- Some courses yield as little as one credit; others yield as many as five credits.

Interpretation

- Adults engage in an extraordinarily wide range of credit-earning activities. They attend all-day workshops, three-day weekend retreats, week-long intensive events, professional-development sessions, television courses, graduate seminars, and advanced study programs, as well as standard, multi-session, regular term courses. And they are awarded credit accordingly.
- Adults can only take advantage of what colleges have to offer.



Number of Credits Earned per Course

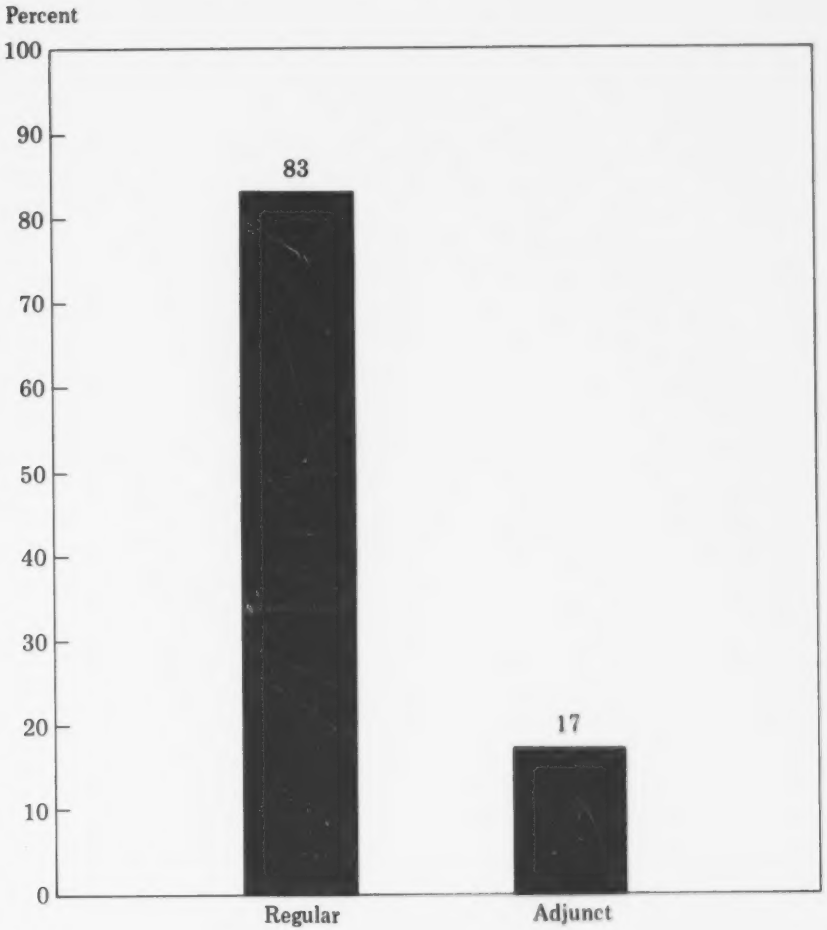
24. Classes Taught by Regular or Adjunct Faculty Members

Observation

- Adult students are not often taught by adjunct faculty members.

Interpretation

- Colleges are reluctant to have credit courses taught by adjunct faculty members.
- Colleges must fill up teaching schedules of faculty with courses having the content, timetables, and locations attractive to adults, given the decline in the number of traditional students.
- The 50 percent of adults who take most of their courses during the day take them from regular faculty members.
- Most adult students receive the same quality of instruction as traditional students and are held to the same academic standards.
- Many adults – probably half – sit in classes shoulder-to-shoulder with traditional students, adding a rich diversity of experience to the education of those younger students.
- The teaching skills of the professors are of greater importance to adult students than the positions they hold within the college.
- Many adults assume that their professors are part of the regular faculty.



Classes Taught by Regular or Adjunct Faculty Members

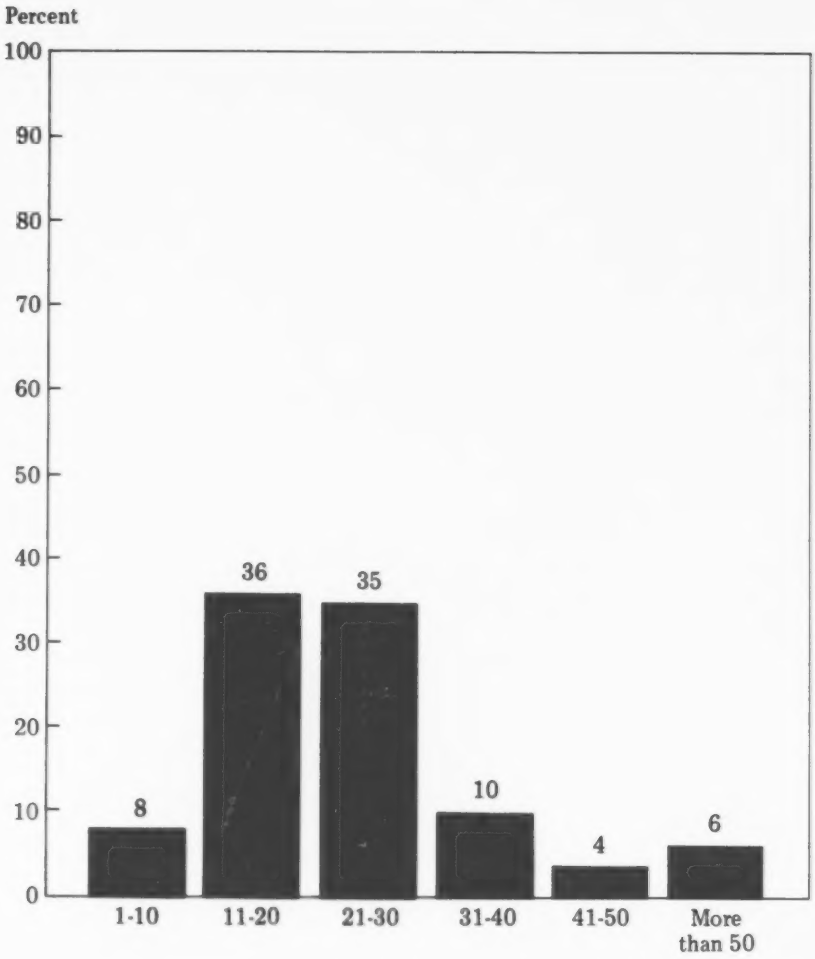
25. Size of Classes

Observation

- Class sizes are clustered tightly in the narrow 11 to 30 range. About 70 percent of all classes attended by adults contain from 11 to 30 students.
- About 10 percent of all classes attended by adults are quite small, providing instruction for one to ten students.
- About 20 percent of all classes attended by adults are large, seating more than 30 students. Indeed, about 10 percent of all classes are quite large, seating more than 40 students.

Interpretation

- Most adults learn in classes that are large enough to be economical yet small enough to permit classroom discussion. The classes also provide a diversity of student background and opinion. Some attention is also given to individual students inside and outside the classroom.
- With respect to class size, most adults have the same kind of experience as traditional students.
- Adults avoid large, lecture hall, freshmen-English-type courses, which younger students are obliged to take.


Percent
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30
20
10
0
8
36
35
10
4
6
1-10
11-20
21-30
31-40
41-50
More than 50
Size of Classes

77

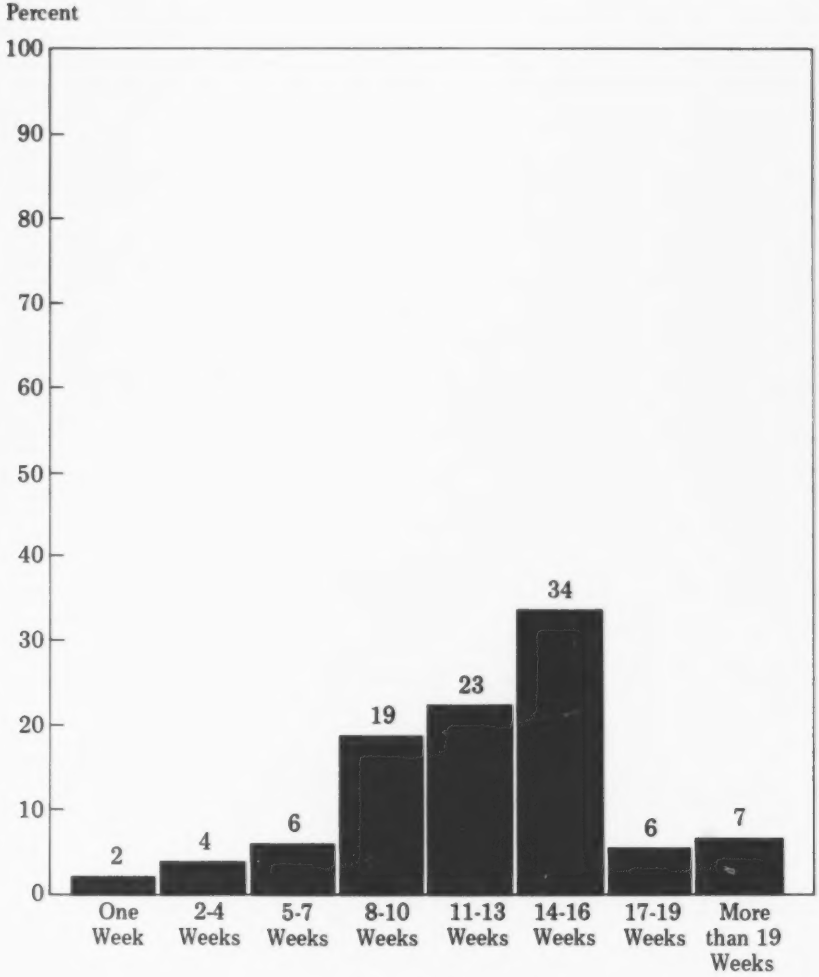
26. Length of Courses

Observation

- Adult students manage to find credit courses ranging in length from one week to 20 weeks, and possibly some even shorter and some even longer.
- Despite the great variety available, over half take courses that last from 11 to 16 weeks, the standard length of a quarter or a semester.
- That some adult students prefer shorter courses is evident: 30 percent select courses lasting 10 weeks or less.

Interpretation

- Some adults would rather come to campus more often, or stay longer once they arrive, than have a course stretch out over more weeks.
- Given the demands of their work and their families, it is not surprising that adults lean toward shorter courses when they can find them, even if those shorter courses require more frequent, or longer, class sessions.
- Adults prefer shorter courses to satisfy their need to compress more courses into a shorter period of time. Their objective is to get degrees or certificates or to complete necessary individual courses as quickly as possible.



Length of Courses

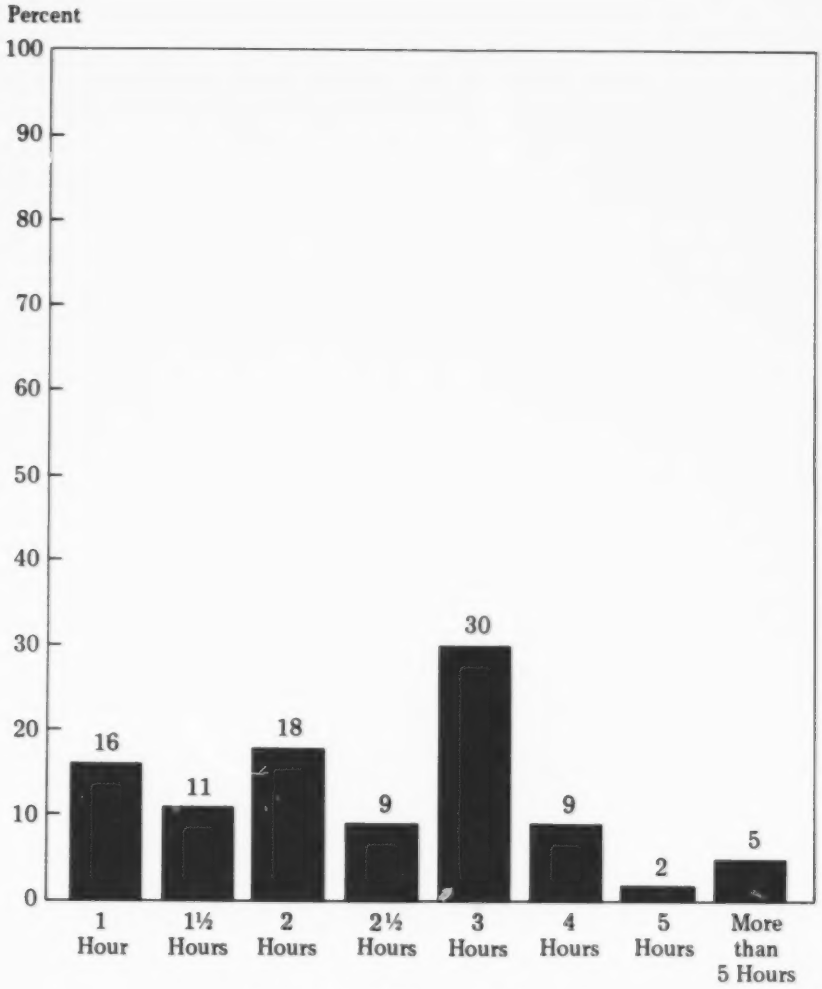
27. Length of Class Sessions

Observation

- A remarkably wide range in the length of class sessions is acceptable to adult students. No single-class session is used for even one-third of their classes.
- Some courses are sliced into one-hour segments, some into two-hour segments, some into four-hour segments, and some into segments lasting more than five hours.
- The most popular length of session is three hours – long by traditional standards. Yet about 15 percent of all class sessions are even longer.

Interpretation

- Given the compelling importance of location, the strong appeal of convenience, and the desirability of easy parking, it is evident that the trip to campus is a signal event in the lives of adult students. Once there, it makes sense for them to stay in order to avoid more frequent trips.
- In general, adults prefer shorter courses with longer class sessions.



Length of Class Sessions

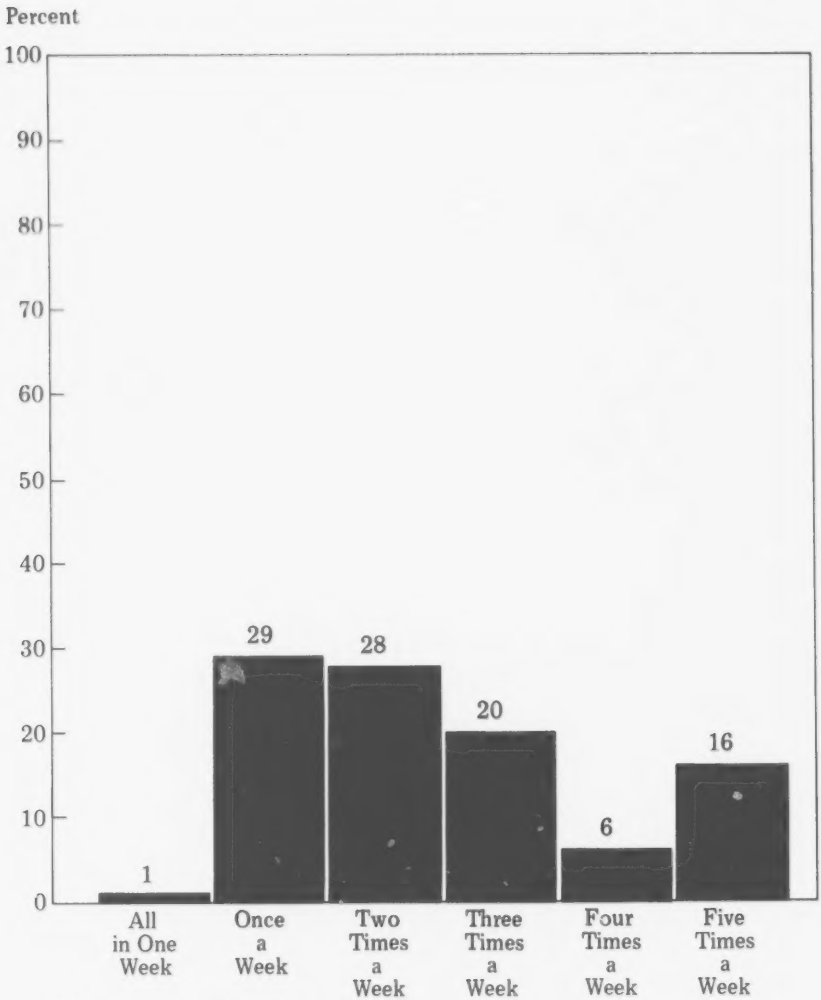
28. Weekly Schedule of Classes

Observation

- Most adult students – about 60 percent – go to class once or twice a week. Half of them go once and the other half go twice.
- Almost all the remaining 40 percent are evenly split between three times a week and five times a week.
- Few go to class four times a week.

Interpretation

- As with other aspects of scheduling classes, the population of adult learners is so diverse that anything appeals to someone.
- Remembering that some adults take only one course a year while others study full time, it is apparent why some prefer once-a-week classes while others prefer classes meeting five times a week.
- For most adults, life off campus is too crowded to attend classes more than once or twice a week.


Percent
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10
0
1
29
28
20
6
16
All in One Week
Once a Week
Two Times a Week
Three Times a Week
Four Times a Week
Five Times a Week
Weekly Schedule of Classes

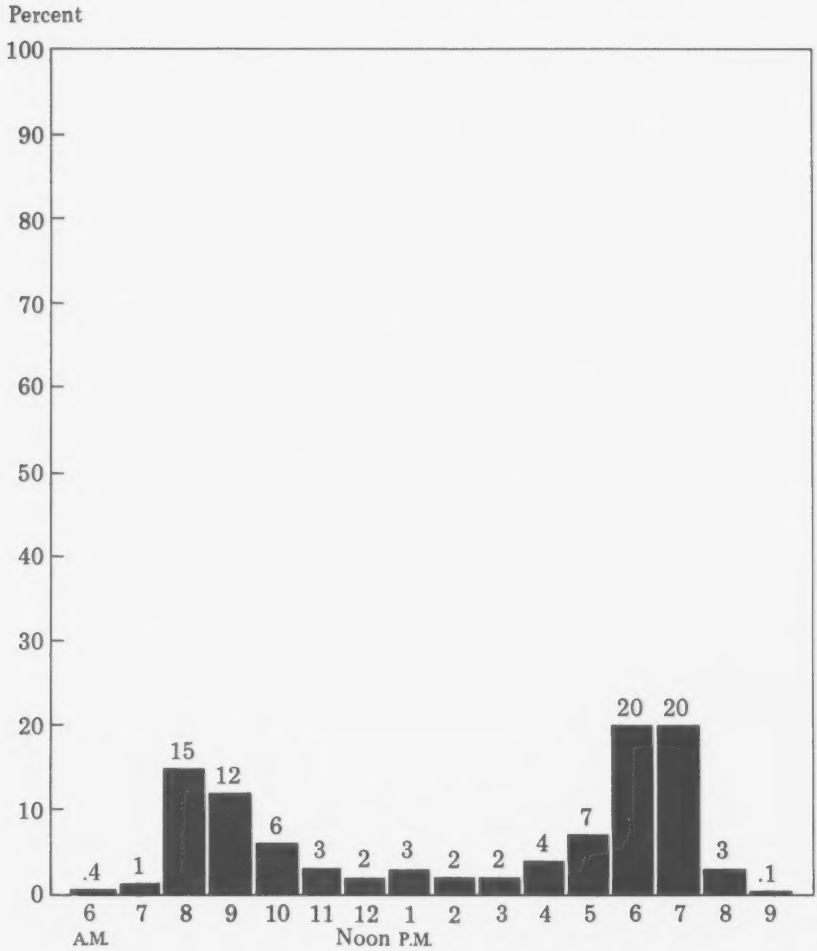
29. Beginning Times of Day or Evening Classes

Observation

- Sunset classes are far more popular with adult students than sunrise classes.
- The two top choices, tied for first place at 20 percent each, are 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.
- Even so, almost 35 percent choose classes that start at 8 a.m., 9 a.m., and 10 a.m.
- Midday has a little more appeal than either very early morning or very late evening, but not much more.
- Half of all adults study before 5 p.m.; half study after 5 p.m.

Interpretation

- The swayback schedule adults choose for themselves suggests that they have other responsibilities during the middle of the day, such as going to work or attending to their children.
- When both adults in a household with children work outside the home, neither can study until the other comes home from work.
- Adult students are attractive to colleges because about half of them use classroom space when traditional students do not, thereby simplifying scheduling for traditional students and lowering overhead costs as well.



Beginning Times of Day or Evening Classes

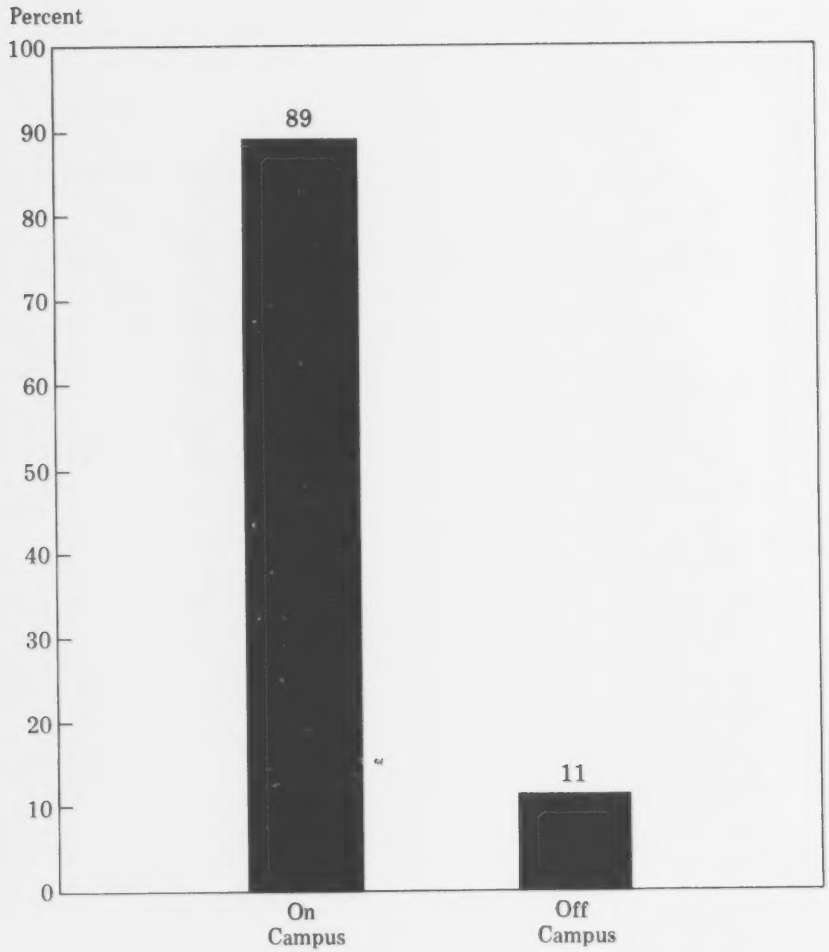
30. Place of Study

Observation

- Adults study on college campuses as do younger students. Few of them study off campus.

Interpretation

- This is surprising for several reasons:
  - Adults find the trip to campus an effort.
  - Some colleges have extended their classes and services to off-campus locations.
  - Terms such as "distance learning" and "campuses without walls" have been used energetically by professional leaders in adult education for years, if not decades.
- Evidently the campus is an oasis for many adults facing competing demands within their daily lives – perhaps remote, but at least serene – a different kind of place with different demands.
- It may be that "high tech" cannot replace "high touch" when it comes to learning – terminals and telescreens don't smile and wave when you walk in or chat over coffee with you when the class is over.
- Whatever the cause – whether adults want to study where the library and the lab are located, or whether colleges want them to, or whether adults and colleges agree – most adults learn in the same classrooms as traditional students, most learn from the same professors as traditional students, and many learn at the same time as traditional students.



Place of Study

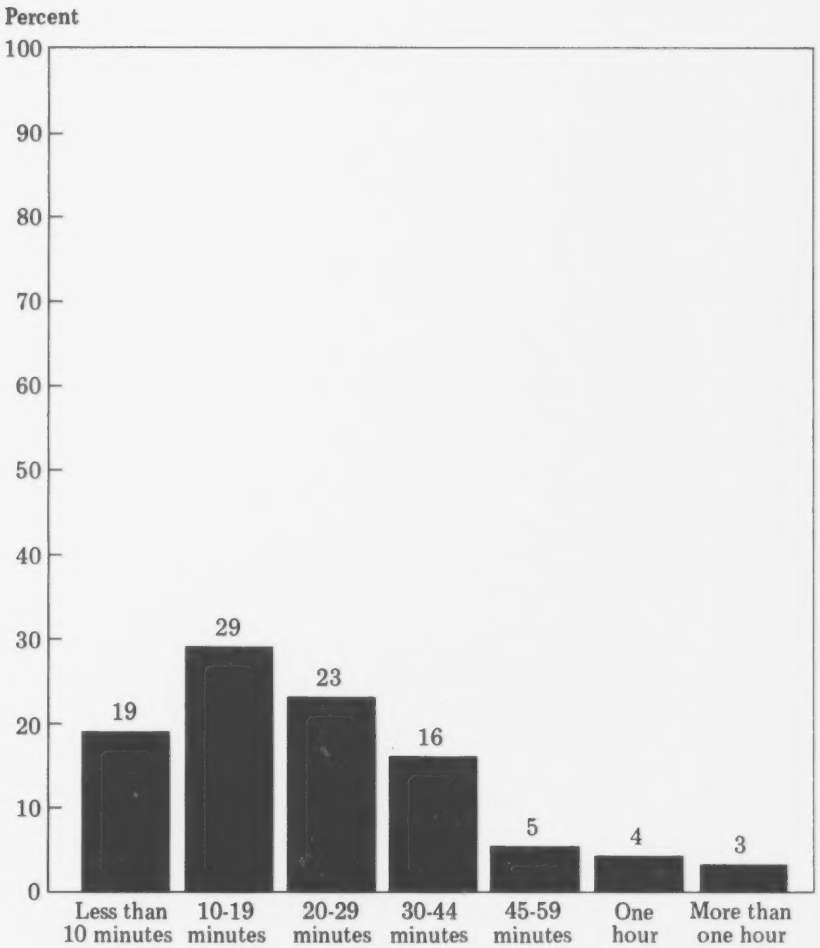
31. Travel Time to Class

Observation

- Adults spend very little time traveling to class. Half of them can get there in less than 20 minutes. Most of the rest can get there in less than 45 minutes. One hour is the extreme upper limit.

Interpretation

- Colleges in the United States are geographically well located. Adults can find colleges to meet their needs close to their homes and close to their jobs.
- No wonder more than 70 percent give convenient location as a prime reason for selecting a college. Adults draw a tight circle of travel time around themselves and then look for a college inside the circle: outside the circle, outside consideration.
- The image of the busy adult emerges once again from these data. Rationing too little time among too many demands, adults have little time for class, less time for study, and no time to waste simply getting to class.
- The best college for an adult may not be the nearest, but it will be the best of the nearest.



Travel Time to Class

89

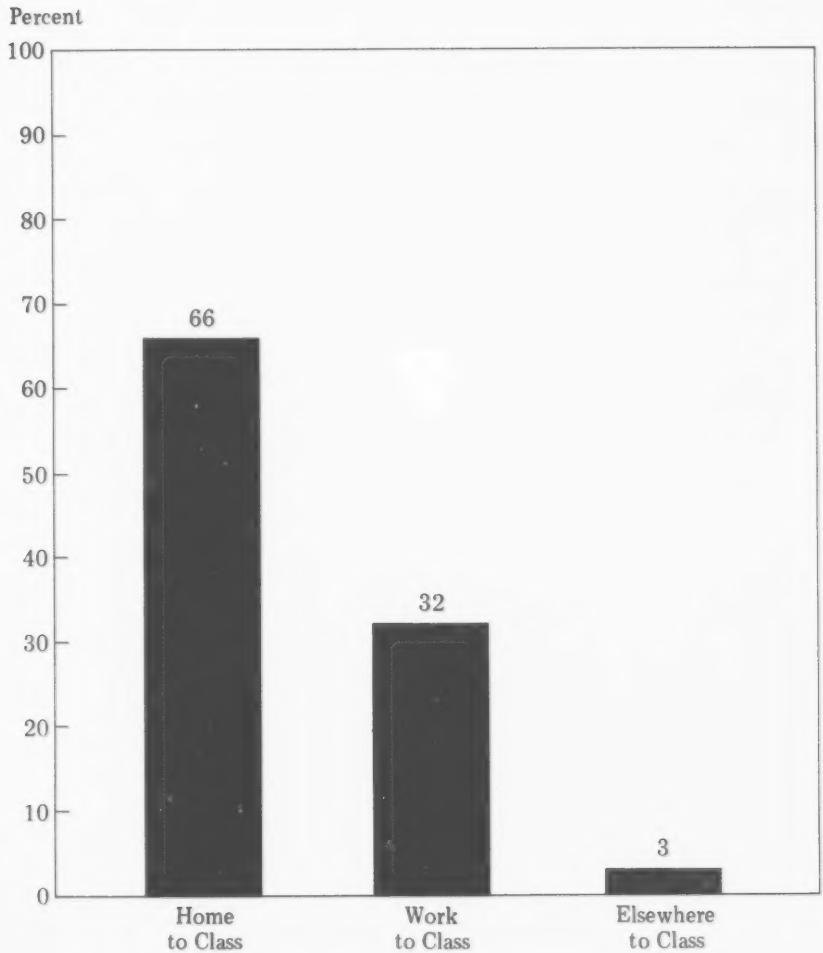
32. Travel to Class from Home or Work

Observation

- Twice as many adults travel to class from home as from work: over 65 percent in contrast to about 30 percent.
- Only a negligible number travel from anywhere else.

Interpretation

- Adults choose colleges closer to their homes than to their work. That choice abbreviates their travel time to home when classes are over. And it permits them to return to campus for special events more easily. For the 50 percent of adults who study before 5 p.m., it is not surprising that they would go to class directly from home. For the other half who study after 5 p.m., a large number obviously go home before going to class.
- Even so, the 30 percent who leave work and go to class constitute a significant segment of the total body of adult students.



Travel to Class from Home or Work

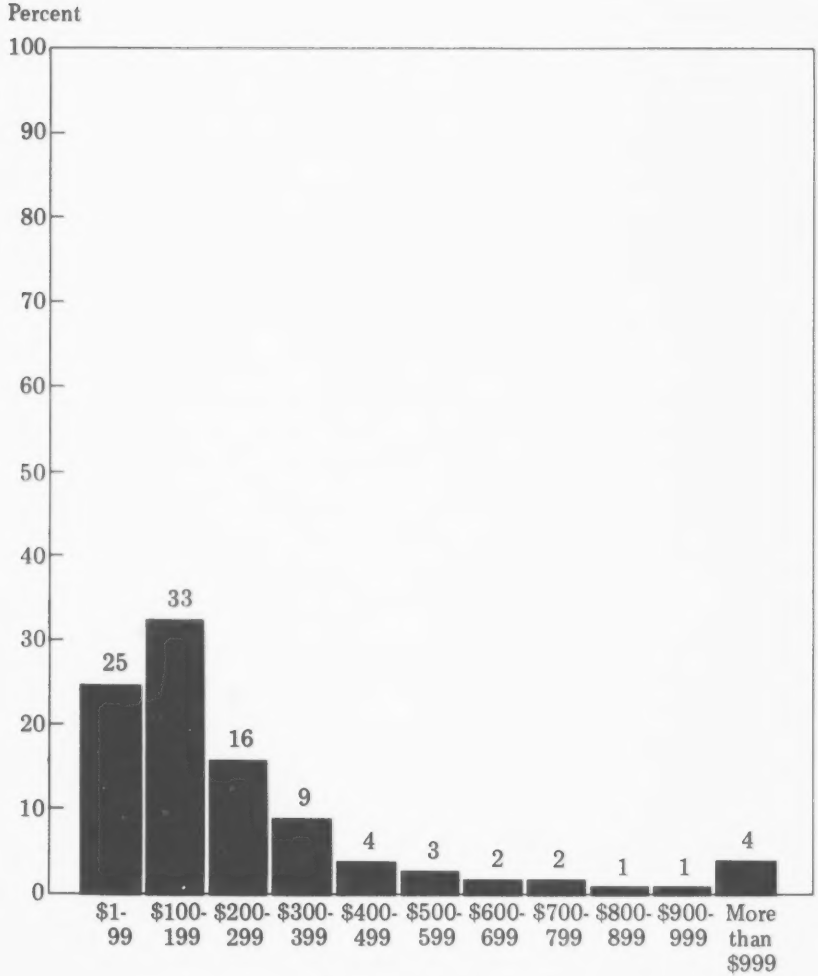
33. Cost of Courses

Observation

- About 60 percent of adults pay less than $200 for a course.
- About 85 percent pay less than $400 for a course.
- Even so, there are few adults who can manage to pay more than $1,000 for a course.

Interpretation

- The fact that about 80 percent of adult students attend public colleges explains why most can buy courses for under $200 each.
- The explanation for the virtual disappearance of price sensitivity on the part of adult students after prices climb to $400 per course suggests that someone else, perhaps an employer, is paying the bill. Or it may be that some high-income adults, including some of those drawn in this sample, pay those high-end prices themselves.
- Adults who are buying courses at the high end are those who are taking courses that offer more than the standard three credits. It is most likely that these adults are those who are studying at the graduate level and may be participating in special internship programs, lengthy seminars, and intensive course work in a short period of time.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$100-199
$200-299
$300-399
$400-499
$500-599
$600-699
$700-799
$800-899
$900-999
More than $999
Cost of Courses

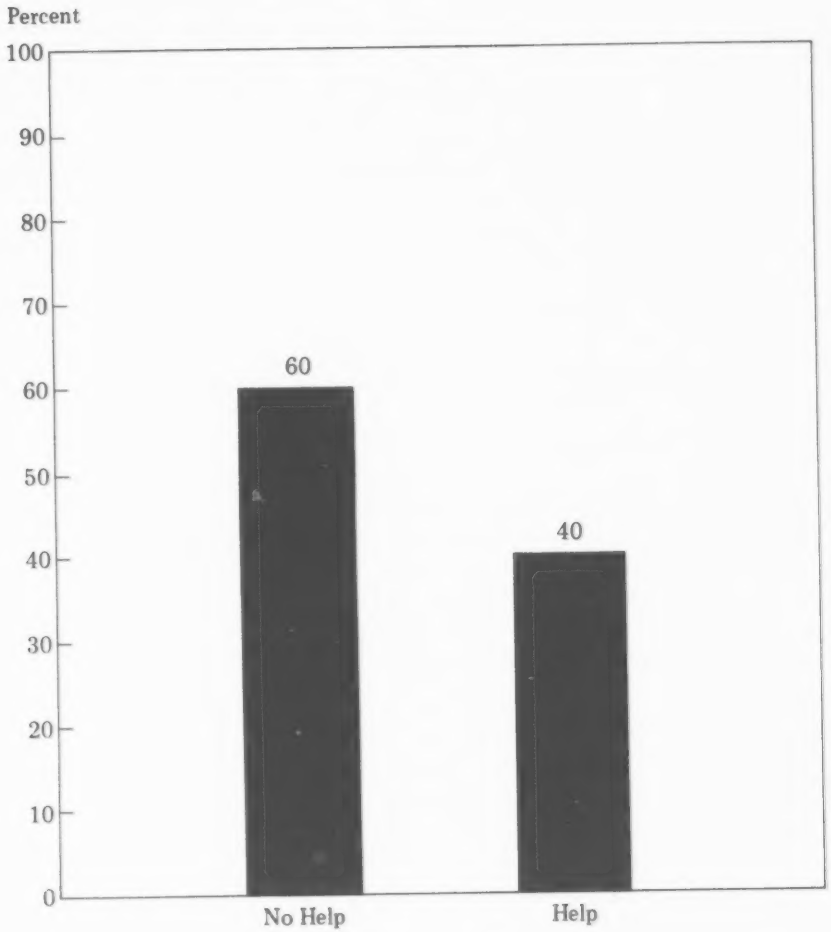
34. Financial Help from Employers

Observation

- While most adults get no financial help from their employers, an impressive 40 percent do get such help.

Interpretation

- Many employers, especially large employers, offer tuition assistance to their employees as a significant benefit.
- Many labor unions, especially large unions, have negotiated tuition assistance into their contracts as a significant benefit to their members.
- If employers pay anything, they usually pay everything. Most employers who pay anything at all agree to cover 75 percent to 100 percent of tuition.
- As many as 40 percent of adult students might not go to college if they did not receive financial help from their employers.



Financial Help from Employers

35. Most Wanted Services

Observation

- The adult students were asked to rate services that colleges could offer. This table shows those services rated highest.
- The services adult students want most are:
  - Convenient registration
  - Parking space
  - Financial help
  - Practical applications of class material
  - Help with jobs off campus
  - Academic and career counseling

Interpretation

- Three themes run through these top-ranked services: logistical ease, financial help, and career connections.
- Adult students want to spend their campus time inside the classrooms, not standing in administrative lines or tracking elusive parking spaces.
- Adult students want financial subsidies (only 40 percent get help from their employers), presumably in the form of scholarships or discounts rather than in the form of loans or delayed payment privileges, and/or they want help in finding or changing jobs.
- Adult students want to connect their college-classroom learning with their careers. Practical applications of classroom material provided by professors is one way, and academic and career counseling are other ways.

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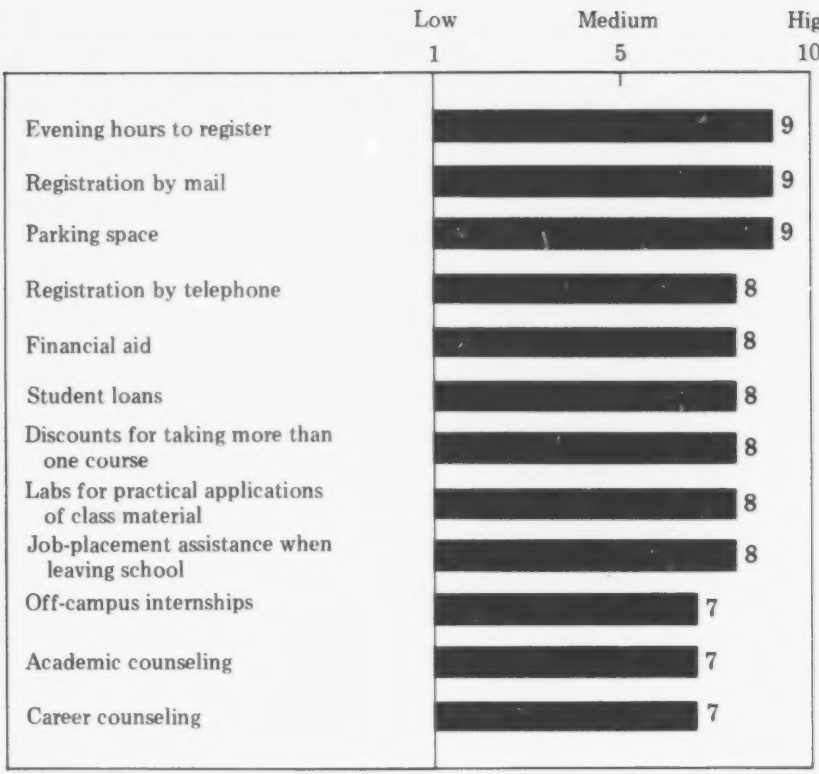


Most Wanted Services

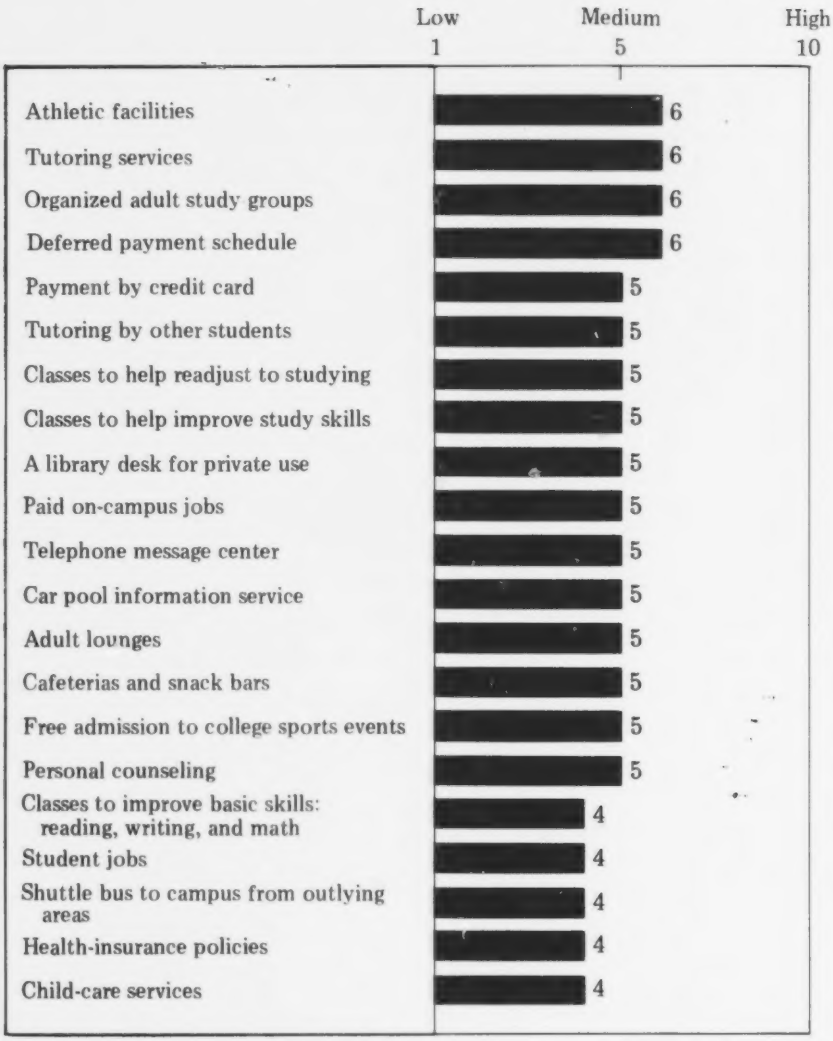
36. Moderately Wanted Services

Observation

- The adult students were asked to rate services that colleges could offer. This table shows those services rated in the middle. Clusters of moderately wanted services include:
  - Campus facilities other than parking space
  - Study assistance
  - Delayed payment
  - Personal information
  - On-campus jobs
  - Personal counseling
  - Shuttle bus to campus from outlying areas
  - Help with personal responsibilities such as health insurance and child care

Interpretation

- The services adult students want only moderately are scattered over an extremely wide range of possibilities. If there is a theme, it is personal assistance with handling the demands of their off-campus lives and reconciling them with the demands of their on-campus lives.



Moderately Wanted Services

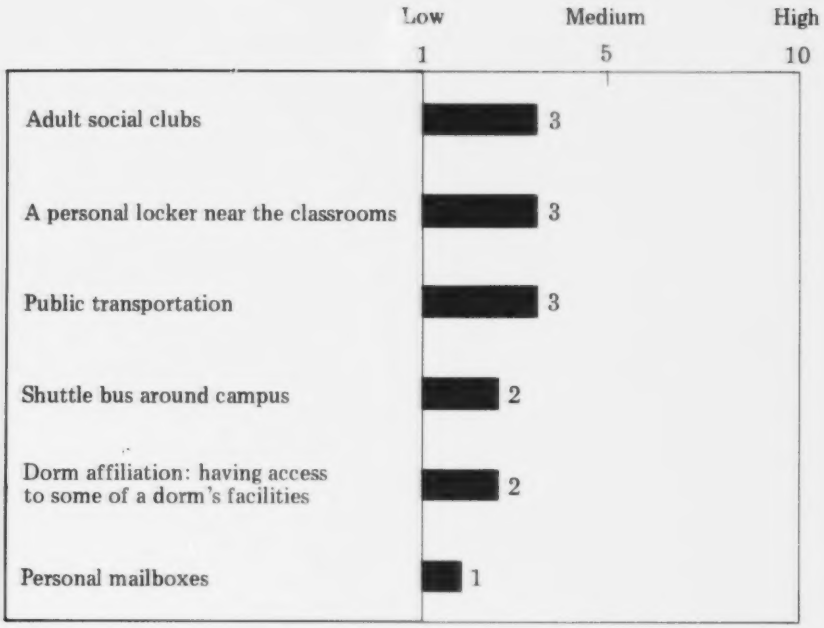
37. Least Wanted Services

Observation

- The adult students were asked to rate services that colleges could offer. This table shows those services rated lowest.
- The services adult students want least are:
  - Organized social activities
  - Personal conveniences
  - Transportation

Interpretation

- Adults are not seeking help with how to spend their leisure time, either on campus or off. They want to get on campus quickly, get into their classrooms, and then get off campus quickly. That is why these services are rated low.



Least Wanted Services

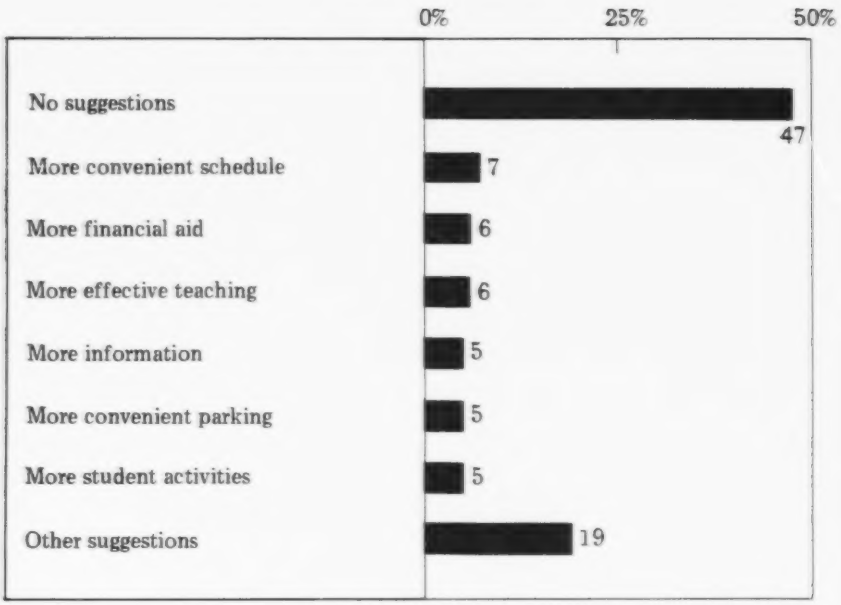
38. How College Could Have Improved Life for Students

Observation

- Adult students volunteer only a few scattered suggestions about what their colleges could have done to make their lives as students better.
- No single idea was mentioned by even 10 percent of them.
- Nearly 50 percent have no suggestions at all.

Interpretation

- Most are satisfied with what their colleges have provided.
- Those who were thoroughly dissatisfied have presumably dropped out.
- There is perhaps one weak theme – a familiar one – convenience.



How College Could Have Improved Life for Students

A number of demographic characteristics of adult students that seemed worth analyzing in greater detail were selected for examination:

- Age
- Sex
- Race
- Employment status
- Occupation
- Education
- Family income

A number of patterns of study among adult students that seemed worth analyzing in greater detail were selected for examination:

- Degree versus nondegree study
- Undergraduate versus graduate study
- Part-time versus full-time study
- Day versus evening study
- Two-year college versus four-year college study
- Public college versus private college study
- Degree major

The following rules were used to guide the analysis:

1. Percentages were rounded up or down to the nearest five percentage points.

2. Differences of fewer than five percentage points were regarded as not worth reporting.

3. Only differences were reported.

On the whole, while there were many differences, few of them were large enough to justify differences in administrative action on behalf of any group of adults, whether grouped by demographic characteristics or by patterns of study.

Age: Differences Between Adult Students in Various Age Groups

Of the 1,000 adult students interviewed by telephone, 324 of 987 (about 35 percent) said they were between the ages of 25 and 29; 222 of 987 (about 20 percent) said they were between the ages of 30 and 34; 179 of 987 (about 20 percent) said they were between the ages of 35 and 39; and 262 of 987 (about 25 percent) said that they were 40 or older.

Demographic Differences

There were no demographic differences according to age.

Patterns of Study

The younger adults (those between the ages of 25 and 29) tend to study full time more often than do the older adults (those 40 or older). About 30 percent of the younger adults study full time. Only about 20 to 25 percent of the adults in their thirties study full time, and only about 10 percent of the older adults study full time.

The younger the adult, the more likely he or she is to be studying in a degree program. About 75 percent of the younger adults are studying in a degree program, while only about 40 percent of the older adults are studying in a degree program.

Of the adults studying in degree programs, about half of the younger adults are studying for bachelor's degrees. While bachelor's degrees are still the most commonly sought after by all the other age groups, only about 35 percent of them are studying for bachelor's degrees. Similarly, of the adults *not* studying in degree programs, about 85 percent of the younger adults are taking undergraduate courses, compared to about 70 percent of the older adults.

Several degree fields tend to be selected either more often or less often as students get older. About 10 percent of the younger adult students are taking education degrees, whereas about 20 percent of the older adults are taking education degrees. Similarly, about 10 percent of the younger adults are taking health degrees, compared to about 15 percent of the older adult students. On the other hand, engineering appears to be much more popular with younger adults. About 10 percent of the younger adults are taking engineering

degrees, but not a single adult over 40 is included in this group.

The younger the adult, the more likely he or she is to study before 4 p.m. on weekdays, and the less likely he or she is to study after 4 p.m. on weekdays. About 60 percent of the younger adult degree students are studying before 4 p.m. on weekdays, while only about 40 percent of the older adult degree students are studying before 4 p.m. on weekdays.

Of the nondegree adults interviewed, the majority of each age group take their courses on a campus. About 85 percent of the younger adults take their courses on a campus, compared to about 70 percent of the older adults.

Sex: Differences Between Female and Male Adult Students

Of the 1,000 adult students interviewed by telephone, 571 of 990 (about 60 percent) said they were female; 419 of 990 (about 40 percent) said they were male.

Demographic Differences

Female adult students live more often than male students in urban areas (about 50 percent, compared to about 40 percent), and less often than male adult students in rural areas (about 15 percent, compared to about 20 percent).

Female adult students are older than male adult students. Only about 45 percent of female adult students are between the ages of 25 and 34, compared to about 65 percent of the male adult students, while about 35 percent of female adult students are 40 or older, compared to about 20 percent of male adult students.

About 15 percent of female adult students report that they are divorced, compared to only about 5 percent of male adult students.

Female adult students are less often employed full time than male adult students (about 65 percent, compared to about 80 percent); female adult students are more often employed part time than male adult students (about 15 percent, compared to about 10 percent), and they are more often not employed (about 20 percent, compared to about 10 percent).

Of those adult students who are employed, females tend more often than males to be sales/clerical workers (about 25 percent, compared to about 10 percent), and females tend less often than males to be managerial/proprietary workers (about 10 percent, compared to about 15 percent).

Of those adult students who are not working, females much more frequently than males report that they are homemakers (about 50

percent, compared to almost zero). In contrast, females much less frequently consider themselves full-time students than males (about 25 percent, compared to about 55 percent), and they are much less often unemployed (about 15 percent, compared to about 35 percent).

Female adult students have not reached levels of education quite as high as male adult students. About 25 percent of the female adult students have only a high school diploma, or one year of college, compared to about 15 percent of the male adult students. About 45 percent of the female adult students have earned at least a bachelor's degree, compared to about 50 percent of male adult students.

Patterns of Study

About 55 percent of the female adult students are studying in degree programs, compared to about 65 percent of the male adult students. Of those degree students, females study more often for an associate degree (about 30 percent, compared to about 20 percent), and less often for a doctor's degree (about 5 percent, compared to about 10 percent).

Female adult nondegree students are less likely than male adult nondegree students to be taking courses at the undergraduate level (about 65 percent, compared to about 75 percent), and they are more likely to be taking nondegree courses at the graduate level (about 30 percent, compared to about 20 percent).

About 40 percent of the female adult degree students take their courses before 4 p.m. on weekdays, about 50 percent take them after 4 p.m. on weekdays, and about 5 percent take them during weekends. Male adult degree students, however, study more often by day (about 50 percent), less often by night (about 45 percent), and less often during the weekends (almost none).

Female adult degree students are considerably more likely than male adult degree students to be taking degrees in education (about 20 percent, compared to about 10 percent), and in the health professions (about 15 percent, compared to about 5 percent). Female adult degree students are less likely than male adult degree students to be taking degrees in engineering (almost none, compared to about 15 percent), and in computers and information science (about 5 percent, compared to about 10 percent).

About 60 percent of all female adult students attend four-year colleges, compared to about 65 percent of all male adult students.

Female adult students do not receive 76 percent to 100 percent reimbursement for tuition as often as male adult students (about 20 percent, compared to about 30 percent).

Race: Differences Between White and Non-White Adult Students

Of the 1,000 adult students interviewed by telephone, 869 of 983 (about 90 percent) said they were white; 114 of 983 (about 10 percent) said they were non-white.

Demographic Differences

White adult students live more often in suburban areas than non-white adult students (about 35 percent, compared to about 20 percent), and in rural areas (about 20 percent, compared to about 10 percent); non-white adult students live more often in urban areas than white adult students (about 70 percent, compared to about 45 percent).

About 65 percent of white adult students are married and about 25 percent are single; about 50 percent of non-white adult students are married and about 30 percent are single.

One difference between white and non-white adult students is in occupation. About 5 percent of white adult students are service workers, compared to about 15 percent of non-white adult students.

White adult students have reached a higher level of education than non-white adult students. About 50 percent of them have earned at least a bachelor's degree, compared to about 35 percent of non-white adult students.

White adult students more often have a higher family income than non-white adult students. About 50 percent of the white adult students have annual family incomes over $30,000, compared to about 25 percent of non-white adult students.

Patterns of Study

About 40 percent of the white adult degree students are taking bachelor's degrees and about 30 percent of them are taking master's degrees. Thus, white adult students are somewhat more graduate-oriented than non-white adult students; about 50 percent of the white adult students are taking bachelor's degrees and about 20 percent of them are taking master's degrees. As for nondegree adult students, the pattern is similar. About 70 percent of white non-degree adult students are taking undergraduate courses and about 30 percent are taking graduate courses. About 80 percent of the non-white adult students are taking undergraduate courses and about 15 percent are taking graduate courses.

When do they take the courses? About 45 percent of the white adult degree students take their courses before 4 p.m. on weekdays, about 50 percent take them after 4 p.m. on weekdays, and about 5

percent take them during weekends. Non-white adult degree students, however, study more often by day (about 55 percent), less often by night (about 35 percent), and more often during the weekends (about 10 percent).

What do they study? White adult students do not take certain degrees in the same proportion as non-white adult students. About 10 percent of the white adult degree students take computers, about 15 percent take education, about 5 percent take engineering, almost none take philosophy and religion, and almost none take technical/vocational subjects. In contrast, about 5 percent of the non-white adult degree students take computers, about 10 percent take education, about 10 percent take engineering, about 5 percent take philosophy and religion, and about 5 percent take technical/vocational subjects.

As for nondegree students, about 15 percent of the white adults take computer courses, compared to about 25 percent of the non-white adults.

Where do they study? About 65 percent of white adult students study at four-year colleges, compared to 55 percent of non-white adult students. About 80 percent of white adult students study at public colleges, compared to about 70 percent of non-white adult students.

How long does it take to get to class? White adult students take slightly less time than non-whites to get to classes. About 20 percent of the white adult students travel only 10 minutes or less to class. Only about 10 percent of the non-white adult students travel 10 minutes or less to class.

White adult students, it appears, take shorter courses than non-white adult students. About 10 percent of the courses taken by the white adult students are one- or two-credit courses, compared to about 5 percent of the courses taken by non-white adult students. Similarly, about 10 percent of the courses taken by the white adult students are five-credit courses, compared to about 20 percent by the non-white adult students.

Employment Status: Differences Between Adult Students Working Full Time, Part Time, or Not Working

Of the 1,000 students interviewed by telephone, 705 of 986 (about 70 percent) said they were employed full time; 119 of 986 (about 10 percent) said they were employed part time; and 162 of 986 (about 15 percent) said they were not working.

Demographic Differences

Adult students who are employed full time tend to be a bit older than adult students who are employed part time. About 30 percent of the adult students employed full time are between the ages of 25 and 29, and about 40 percent of the adult students who are employed part time are between the ages of 25 and 29.

The percentage of adult students employed full time who are male (about 45 percent) is greater than the percentage of adult students employed part time who are male (about 35 percent) or adult students who are not employed at all who are male (about 30 percent).

Employed adult students are more likely to have completed a higher level of education than adult students who are not employed. About 30 percent of all employed adult students have earned less than a two-year college degree. In contrast, about 45 percent of all adult students who are not employed have earned less than a two-year degree.

Patterns of Study

Adult students who are employed full time are much less often full-time students as well. About 15 percent of adults who are employed full time are also full-time students; about 40 percent of adults who are employed part time are full-time students; and about 30 percent of adults who are not employed are full-time students.

Adult students working full time are less likely to be enrolled in a degree program (about 55 percent) than are adult students who work part time (about 70 percent) and adult students who do not work (about 60 percent).

Adult full-time workers take their degrees more often at the graduate level. About 35 percent of them are working toward master's degrees, compared to about 25 percent of the adult part-time workers and about 10 percent of the adults who do not work. Similarly, adult full-time workers who are nondegree students take their courses more often at the graduate level. About 30 percent of them take graduate courses, compared to about 20 percent of the adult part-time workers and about 10 percent of the adults who do not work.

Adult full-time workers are more likely to take their courses during weekday evenings or on weekends than adults who work part time or who do not work. About 55 percent of the adults who work full time take their courses during weekday evenings, and about 5 percent of them take their courses during weekends. This differs from adults who work part time; only about 25 percent study during

weekday evenings and almost none study during weekends. Similarly, about 30 percent of the adults who do not work take their classes during weekday evenings, and almost none take them during weekends.

A majority of each group of adult students prefers to travel to classes from home rather than from work. However, only about 60 percent of adult full-time workers prefer to travel to classes from home, compared to about 75 percent of adult part-time workers, and about 85 percent of adults who are not employed.

Occupation: Differences Between Adult Students in Various Occupations

Of the 824 employed adult students interviewed by telephone, 518 of 819 (about 65 percent) said they were employed as either professional/technical workers or managerial/proprietary workers; 301 of 819 (about 35 percent) said they had some other type of employment (e.g., sales/clerical, craft worker, or service worker). For convenience we refer to the first group as professional workers and the second group as other workers.

Demographic Differences

A majority of all employed adult students work full time. About 90 percent of the professional workers are employed full time, and about 80 percent of the other workers are employed full time.

Adult students who are professionals have completed a higher level of education than the other workers. About 70 percent of the professionals have completed at least a four-year degree; in contrast, only about 20 percent of the other workers have completed at least a four-year degree.

Adult students who are professionals have a higher family income than the other workers. About 55 percent of the professionals have yearly family incomes of at least $30,000; in contrast, only about 35 percent of the other workers have yearly family incomes of at least $30,000.

Patterns of Study

Professional workers are much more disposed toward graduate study than other workers. About 45 percent of all professionals are studying at the graduate level. This is in contrast to the other workers, only about 10 percent of whom are studying at the graduate level.

Among the adult degree students, business majors are less

common among professional workers (about 25 percent) than among other workers (about 35 percent). On the other hand, education majors are more common among professionals (about 25 percent) than among other workers (about 10 percent).

Among all adult students, professional workers study more often at four-year colleges (about 75 percent) than at two-year colleges, while other workers study just as often at four-year colleges (about 50 percent) as at two-year colleges.

Among all adult students, professional workers paid somewhat more for their courses. About 20 percent payed $400 or more, compared to about 10 percent of other workers. Similarly, about 20 percent of professional workers paid less than $100 for their courses, compared to about 35 percent of other workers.

Education: Differences Between Adult Students Who Have Completed Various Levels of Education

Of the 1,000 adult students interviewed by telephone, 251 of 977 (about 25 percent) said they had completed a graduate degree or had taken some graduate courses; 209 of 977 (about 20 percent) said they had completed a bachelor's degree; 127 of 977 (about 15 percent) said they had taken three or four years of college but had not yet completed a degree; 82 of 977 (about 10 percent) said they had completed an associate degree; 184 of 977 (about 20 percent) said they had taken one or two years of college but had not yet completed a degree; 124 of 977 (about 15 percent) said they had only a high school diploma.

Demographic Differences

The youngest groups of adult students are those with only a high school diploma and those with three or four years of college, but no degree (about 45 percent of each group is between the ages of 25 and 29). The oldest group of adult students is studying at the graduate level (about 80 percent of the group is 30 and over).

The groups of adult students with the highest proportion of females are those with only a high school diploma and those with one or two years of college, but no degree (each group is about 65 percent female). The group of adult students with the highest proportion of males has three or four years of college, but no degree (about 50 percent male).

Adult students who have done some graduate work are more likely to be married and less likely to be divorced than adult

students with lower levels of education (about 70 percent are married and about 5 percent are divorced). Adult students who have had three or four years of college, but have not yet earned a degree, are less likely to be married (about 45 percent are married). Adult students with a bachelor's degree are also somewhat less likely to be divorced than less-educated adults.

Adult students with up to four years of college study and/or an associate degree, but no bachelor's degree, are less often white (about 85 percent white) than adult students with only a high school diploma or adult students with a bachelor's degree or graduate study (about 90 percent white).

Adult students with graduate study or with two-year or four-year degrees are more likely than less-educated adult students to be working full time (about 80 percent, compared to about 60 percent), and less likely to be not working at all (about 10 percent, compared to about 20 percent). Adult students with three or four years of college, but no degree, are more likely than any other group to be working part time (about 20 percent). Adult students with only high school diplomas are also more likely than most groups to be working part time (about 15 percent).

The more educated an adult student is, the more likely he or she is to be a professional/technical worker. About 10 percent of all adult students with no college experience are in this category, compared to about 60 percent of bachelor's-degree holders and about 80 percent of adult students with some graduate study. The reverse is true for most of the other job categories. The more educated an adult student is, the less likely he or she is to be a sales/clerical worker, a service worker, a craft worker, or a machine operator.

Patterns of Study

Adult students with some graduate study or with only a high school diploma are more likely to be studying part time (11 or fewer credits per semester) than other groups of adult students (about 85 percent, compared to about 65 to 80 percent).

Adult students with an associate degree or with three or four years of college, but no degree, are most likely to be studying in a degree program (about 70 percent). About 55 percent of all other adult students are studying in a degree program, except those with only a high school education, for whom the figure is only about 45 percent.

Of the adult degree students, those with one or two years of college or with an associate degree are more likely than others to be taking a degree in business (about 35 percent, compared to about 25 percent), and in the health professions (about 15 percent, compared to about 10 percent). In addition, they, along with adult students

with only a high school diploma, are more likely to be taking a degree in computer science and/or information science (about 10 percent, compared to about 5 percent). Finally, about 35 percent of the adult students with some graduate study are taking degrees in education, and about 20 percent of the adult students with a bachelor's degree are also taking degrees in education. This compares with about 10 percent of the less-educated groups.

Of the adult degree students, those with three or four years of college, but no degree, are most likely to take their courses during weekday days (about 60 percent), and are least likely to take their courses during weekday evenings (about 35 percent). Those with only a high school diploma are least likely to take their courses during weekday days (about 35 percent), and are most likely to take their courses during weekday evenings (about 60 percent).

About 35 percent of all adult students with, at most, a two-year degree, study at four-year colleges. This is in contrast to better-educated adult students (about 70 percent of those with three or four years of college, but no degree; who are studying at four-year colleges; about 80 percent of those with a bachelor's degree; and about 90 percent of those with some graduate study).

The more educated the adult, the more likely he or she is to study at a private college rather than a public college. About 25 percent of adult students with some graduate study take courses at private colleges, compared to about 10 percent of adult students with little or no college experience. In addition, when selecting a college, the more educated adult students tend to place greater importance on academic quality, specific programs, and type of curriculum, and less importance on location.

The better-educated adult students are more likely to travel to classes from work (about 35 percent of those with at least a bachelor's degree, compared to about 25 percent of those with, at most, an associate degree). In addition, better-educated adult students are, in general, more willing to travel longer distances to take their classes.

Family Income: Differences Between Adult Students at Various Income Levels

Of the 1,000 adult students interviewed by telephone, 73 of 900 (about 10 percent) said their family income in the past year was less than $10,000; 176 of 900 (about 20 percent) said their family income in the past year was between $10,000 and $19,000; 243 of 900 (about 25 percent) said their family income in the past year was between $20,000 and $29,000; 283 of 900 (about 30 percent) said their family

income in the past year was between $30,000 and $39,000; 101 of 900 (about 10 percent) said their family income in the past year was between $50,000 and $75,000; and 24 of 900 (about 5 percent) said their family income in the past year was over $75,000.

Demographic Differences

As family income increases, a larger percentage of the adult students are older (40 or over). About 20 percent of adult students with family incomes below $10,000 are 40 or over, while about 30 percent of adult students with family incomes above $30,000 are 40 or over.

As family income increases, a larger percentage of the adult students are married as opposed to being either single or divorced. About 20 percent of adult students with family incomes below $10,000 are married (about 55 percent are single and about 20 percent are divorced), while about 80 percent of adult students with family incomes above $30,000 are married (about 15 percent are single and about 5 percent are divorced).

As family income increases, a larger percentage of the adult students are white. About 80 percent of adult students with family incomes below $10,000 are white (about 20 percent are non-white), while about 95 percent of adult students with family incomes above $30,000 are white (about 5 percent are non-white).

Patterns of Study

As family income increases, a larger percentage of adult students study full time (12 or more credits). About 45 percent of adult students with family incomes below $10,000 study full time, while about 85 percent of adult students with family incomes above $30,000 study full time.

As family income increases, a smaller percentage of adult students study in degree programs. About 85 percent of adult students with family incomes below $10,000 study in degree programs, while about 55 percent of adult students with family incomes above $30,000 study in degree programs.

As family income increases, a larger percentage of adult degree and nondegree students study at the graduate level. About 15 percent of adult students with family incomes below $10,000 study for graduate degrees or take graduate courses, while about 35 percent of adult students with family incomes above $30,000 study for graduate degrees or take graduate courses.

As family income increases, a larger percentage of adult degree students study during weekday evenings. About 15 percent of adult degree students with family incomes below $10,000 study during

weekday evenings (about 80 percent study during weekday days), while about 55 percent of adult degree students with family incomes above $30,000 study during weekday evenings (about 40 percent study during weekday days).

As family income increases, a larger percentage of adult degree and nondegree students take courses in business. About 15 percent of adult students with family incomes below $10,000 take courses in business, while about 25 percent of adult students with family incomes above $30,000 take courses in business.

Degree versus *Nondegree Study*: Differences Between Degree and Nondegree Adult Students

Of the 1,000 adult students interviewed by telephone, 585 of 991 (about 60 percent) said they had been studying in a degree program; 406 of 991 (about 40 percent) said they had not been studying in a degree program but had been taking individual credit courses.

Demographic Differences

Adult degree students tend to be younger than adult nondegree students. About 40 percent of the adult degree students are between the ages of 25 and 29, compared to only about 20 percent of adult nondegree students. Similarly, only about 20 percent of adult degree students are 40 or older, but about 40 percent of adult nondegree students are 40 or older.

While the majority of all adult students are female, adult degree students are much more evenly balanced between the sexes than adult nondegree students. Adult degree students are only about 55 percent female, but adult nondegree students are about 65 percent female.

Adult degree students have completed three or four years of college with no degree (about 15 percent) more often than adult nondegree students (about 10 percent). Adult degree students, however, have master's degrees less often (about 15 percent, compared to about 20 percent), and less often have only a high school diploma (about 10 percent compared to about 15 percent).

Patterns of Study

A majority of adult degree students study part time (about 70 percent), but a sizeable minority study full time (about 30 percent). Adult nondegree students, however, are almost exclusively part time (about 95 percent).

There is a very significant difference between the type of college chosen by adult degree students and adult nondegree students. A large majority of adult degree students attend four-year colleges (about 75 percent), but only a minority of nondegree students attend four-year colleges (about 45 percent). A majority of nondegree students attend two-year colleges.

For the most part, whether an adult is studying for a degree does not influence what he or she chooses to study. One exception is computers. Adult degree students are actually less likely to be enrolled in a computer-science degree program (about 10 percent) than adult nondegree students are to be taking computer courses (about 15 percent).

Undergraduate versus *Graduate Study:* Differences Between Undergraduate and Graduate Adult Students

Of the 1,000 adult students interviewed by telephone, 672 of 968 (about 70 percent) said they were studying at the undergraduate level; 296 of 968 (about 30 percent) said they were studying at the graduate level.

Demographic Differences

Undergraduate students are younger than graduate students: about 55 percent of adult undergraduate students are under 35, compared to about 50 percent of adult graduate students. At the same time, undergraduate students have lower incomes than graduate students. About 60 percent of adult undergraduate students have incomes below $30,000, compared to about 40 percent of adult graduate students. Adult undergraduate students are less often married than adult graduate students (about 60 percent, compared to about 65 percent), and adult undergraduate students tend to be less often white than adult graduate students (about 85 percent, compared to about 90 percent).

Finally, adult undergraduate students are less often employed (about 80 percent, compared to about 90 percent). Furthermore, adult undergraduate students are less often employed full time than adult graduate students (about 65 percent, compared to about 80 percent). When working, adult undergraduate students hold professional or technical jobs less often than do adult graduate students (about 35 percent, compared to about 75 percent); and adult undergraduate students hold sales/clerical jobs more often than do graduate students (about 25 percent, compared to about 5 percent).

Patterns of Study

Slightly fewer adult undergraduate students (about 55 percent) enroll in degree programs than do adult graduate students (about 65 percent). The remaining adult undergraduate students (about 45 percent) and the remaining adult graduate students (about 35 percent) enroll in individual credit courses. Furthermore, while the number-one field of study among adult undergraduate degree students is business (about 30 percent), adult graduate degree students select education most often as their field of study (about 30 percent). The second most popular area of study for adult undergraduate students is health (about 15 percent), whereas the second most popular area for adult graduate students is business (about 20 percent). When most of their courses are taken for degrees, more adult undergraduate students (about 55 percent) take those courses before 4 p.m. on weekdays than do adult graduate students (about 35 percent), the majority of whom take most of their courses after 4 p.m. Finally, adult undergraduate students are less likely to earn all their credit toward a degree at one college (about 55 percent did not transfer credits toward their undergraduate degree) than are adult graduate students (about 80 percent did not transfer credits toward their graduate degree).

Adult undergraduate students (degree and nondegree) are more likely to study at public colleges. Whereas about 85 percent of adult undergraduate students attend public colleges, about 70 percent of adult graduate students also do so. Adult undergraduate students (about 70 percent) rank location as their primary reason for choosing their colleges more often than do adult graduate students (about 60 percent). Also, cost is more important as a secondary reason for selecting a college for adult undergraduate students (about 30 percent) than it is for adult graduate students (about 20 percent). Adult undergraduate students point to the curriculum offered and to the academic quality of a college (about 45 percent) as reasons for selecting a college less often than do adult graduate students (about 55 percent).

The most popular field of study among both adult undergraduate students and adult graduate students is business (about 20 percent in each case). However, fewer adult undergraduate students (about 5 percent) than adult graduate students (about 25 percent) take courses in education. Adult undergraduate students (about 60 percent) receive three credits for the courses they take less often than do adult graduate students (about 70 percent). Adult undergraduate students (about 30 percent) receive four or five credits for a course more often than do adult graduate students (about 20 percent). Finally, whereas adult undergraduate students do not

differ from adult graduate students with respect to the number of courses they take in a given year, they do differ with respect to full-time versus part-time study (about 25 percent study full time, compared to about 15 percent of adult graduate students).

Adult undergraduate students (about 60 percent) tend to learn in larger classrooms (more than 20 students) than do adult graduate students (about 50 percent). More adult undergraduate students than adult graduate students travel from home, rather than from work, to their classes. That is to say, whereas about 70 percent of the adult undergraduate students go to class directly from home, about 55 percent of adult graduate students also do so. Further, adult undergraduate students spend less time getting to their classes – about 50 percent travel less than 20 minutes to get to their classes, compared to about 40 percent of adult graduate students.

Adult undergraduate students pay less for their courses than do adult graduate students – about 80 percent pay less than $300 for their courses in contrast to about 60 percent of the adult graduate students.

Part-time versus *Full-time Study:* Differences Between Full-time and Part-time Adult Students

Of the 1,000 adult students interviewed by telephone, 777 of 991 (about 80 percent) said they studied part time (took 11 or fewer credits in their last semester of study); 214 of 991 (about 20 percent) said they studied full time and had taken 12 or more credits in their last semester of study. (Pages 62 and 63 in Part II report that 75 percent of adults study part time and that 25 percent study full time. Evidently, full-time adult students are slightly more likely than part-time adult students to take one or two courses earning fewer than three credits per course, creating a small discrepancy between the 25 percent who take eight or more courses in a year and the 21.6 percent who earn 24 or more credits in a year.)

Demographic Differences

About 30 percent of part-time adult students are 40 or older, compared to only about 10 percent of full-time adult students. Similarly, only about 30 percent of part-time adult students are between the ages of 25 and 29, but about 50 percent of the full-time adult students fit into that age category.

Patterns of Study

Only about 50 percent of all part-time adult students are enrolled in degree study, which is in sharp contrast to full-time students, a large majority of whom are enrolled in degree study (about 85 percent). The part-time adults who are enrolled in degree study are equally likely to be studying for a bachelor's degree or a master's degree (about 35 percent of each). However, full-time adult degree students are much more likely to be taking a bachelor's degree than a master's degree (about 55 percent, compared to about 15 percent).

Part-time adult students go to school chiefly during weekday evenings (about 60 percent), but a substantial minority (about 30 percent) go to school during weekday days. This is in direct contrast with full-time students, about 75 percent of whom go to school during weekday days, and about 20 percent during weekday evenings.

Day versus *Evening Study:* Differences Between Day Degree and Evening Degree Adult Students

Of the 568 adult degree students interviewed by telephone, 270 of 568 (close to 50 percent) said they took most of their courses before 4 p.m. on weekdays; 279 of 568 (close to 50 percent) said they took most of their courses after 4 p.m. on weekdays; 19 of 568 (about 3 percent) said they took most of their courses during weekends, off campus. We will refer to those adult degree students who took most of their courses before 4 p.m. on weekdays as day students, and to those who took most of their courses after 4 p.m. on weekdays as evening students.

Demographic Differences

Day students are younger than evening students. About 50 percent of all adult day students are between the ages of 25 and 29, compared to about 35 percent of evening students. About 10 percent of adult day students are 40 or over, compared to about 20 percent of adult evening students.

Evening students are split evenly between men and women, but day students are about 60 percent women.

About 50 percent of day students are married (compared to about 65 percent of evening students), and about 40 percent of day students are single (compared to about 25 percent of evening students).

A large majority of adult evening students are employed full time (about 80 percent), while only about 55 percent of the day students are employed full time.

Patterns of Study

A large majority of evening study is part-time study (about 85 percent), but a minority of day study is part-time study (about 45 percent).

The most commonly sought after degree during the day is the bachelor's degree (about 55 percent). Associate and master's degrees each comprise about 20 percent of day degrees. In contrast, the most commonly sought after degree during the evening is the master's degree (about 35 percent). Associate and bachelor's degrees each comprise about 30 percent of evening degrees.

The most commonly sought after degree majors during the evening are business (about 35 percent), education (about 20 percent), and computer science (about 10 percent). The most common degree majors sought during the day are business (about 20 percent), health (about 20 percent), education (about 10 percent), engineering (about 10 percent), and computer science (about 10 percent). Thus, day degrees are more diverse than evening degrees.

Two-year College versus *Four-year College Study*: Differences Between Four-Year College and Two-Year College Adult Students

Of the 1,000 adult students interviewed by telephone, 563 of 894 (about 65 percent) said they studied at a four-year college; 331 of 894 (about 35 percent) said they studied at a two-year college.

Demographic Differences

Adults who were not working were asked whether they considered themselves homemakers, retired, full-time students, or unemployed. Adults studying at four-year colleges tended less often than those studying at two-year colleges to be homemakers (about 25 percent, compared to about 50 percent), and tended more often to be full-time students (about 45 percent, compared to about 25 percent), and unemployed (about 20 percent, compared to about 10 percent).

Adults at four-year colleges tend to have somewhat higher annual family incomes than adults at two-year colleges. About 25 percent of adults at four-year colleges have annual family incomes under $20,000 (compared to about 35 percent of adults at two-year colleges). Similarly, about 50 percent of adults at four-year colleges

have annual family incomes above $30,000 (compared to about 35 percent of adults at two-year colleges).

Patterns of Study

Certain degree majors are taken more or less often by adults taking degrees at four-year colleges than by those taking degrees at two-year colleges. Education majors are taken by about 20 percent of adults at four-year colleges but only by about 5 percent of adults at two-year colleges. On the other hand, degrees in the health professions are taken by only about 10 percent of adults at four-year colleges, but they are taken by about 20 percent of adults at two-year colleges. Similarly, computer science degrees are taken by only about 5 percent of adults at four-year colleges, but they are taken by about 15 percent of adults at two-year colleges.

About 75 percent of the adults at four-year colleges study at public colleges, while about 90 percent of the adults at two-year colleges study at public colleges.

When asked why they chose their colleges, the adults who were attending four-year colleges gave two reasons more often than adults attending two-year colleges. About 25 percent of adults attending four-year colleges cited academic quality, compared to 10 percent of adults attending two-year colleges. And about 10 percent of adults attending four-year colleges cited specific programs, compared to almost none of the adults attending two-year colleges.

Adults at four-year colleges travel somewhat farther to get to classes than adults at two-year colleges. About 45 percent of adults at four-year colleges travel less than 20 minutes to classes, while about 55 percent of adults at two-year colleges travel less than 20 minutes to classes.

Adults at four-year colleges and two-year colleges take courses in which classes range in size from one student to more than 50 students. However, the range is slightly larger at four-year colleges, where about 65 percent of the students take courses in which class sizes range between 11 and 30 students, compared to two-year colleges where about 80 percent of the students take courses in which class sizes range between 11 and 30 students.

Public College versus *Private College Study*: Differences Between Private College and Public College Adult Students

Of the 1,000 adult students interviewed by telephone, 800 of 982 (about 80 percent) said they studied at a public college; 182 of 982 (about 20 percent) said they studied at a private college.

Demographic Differences

Private colleges tend to attract a greater percentage of adult students with upper-level jobs than public colleges. About 60 percent of all adult students who attend public colleges have professional/technical or managerial/proprietary jobs, while about 75 percent of all adult students who attend private colleges have jobs in those categories.

Patterns of Study

Public colleges supply relatively less graduate study to adults than private colleges. About 25 percent of adults studying at public colleges are studying at the graduate level, compared to about 50 percent of adults studying at private colleges.

Adult degree students studying at public colleges more often study during weekday days (about 50 percent) than adult degree students studying at private colleges (about 35 percent).

Adult degree and nondegree students were asked to give two reasons for choosing their particular colleges. Adults who attend public colleges cited location (about 70 percent, compared to about 55 percent) and low cost (about 30 percent, compared to about 10 percent) more often than adults who attend private colleges. In addition, adults who attend public colleges cited curriculum (about 25 percent, compared to about 35 percent) and schedule (about 5 percent, compared to about 15 percent) less often than adults who attend private colleges.

Degree Major: Differences Between Adult Degree Students Enrolled in Various Majors

Of the 582 adult degree students interviewed by telephone, 158 of 582 (about 25 percent) said they were majoring in business; 97 of 582 (about 15 percent) said they were majoring in education; 68 of 582 (about 10 percent) said they were majoring in a health profession; 44 of 582 (about 10 percent) said they were majoring in computers and/or information science; 40 of 582 (about 5 percent) said they were majoring in engineering; 29 of 582 (about 5 percent) said they were majoring in a social science or history; and 146 of 582 (about 25 percent) said they were majoring in some other subject.

Demographic Differences

Several degree majors differed with respect to the sex of the adult students taking them. Engineering (about 85 percent male) and

computer science and information science (about 60 percent male) are predominantly male majors, while education (about 70 percent female) and health professions (about 70 percent female) are predominantly female majors.

Patterns of Study

Among adult students taking associate and bachelor's degrees, business is the most common degree major (about 30 percent of each). Among adult students taking master's degrees, however, business degrees (about 25 percent) are second to education degrees (about 30 percent). Education degrees represent only about 5 percent of associate degrees and about 15 percent of bachelor's degrees. Health degrees are the second most common associate degree (about 15 percent) and the third most common bachelor's degree (about 10 percent). However, they represent only about 5 percent of all master's degrees. Similarly, computer science degrees are much more common at the undergraduate level, comprising about 10 percent of associate degrees and bachelor's degrees, but almost no master's degrees.

Some degrees are more commonly taken by adults during weekday days and some are more commonly taken during weekday evenings. Degrees in the health professions (about 70 percent weekday day) and in engineering (about 55 percent weekday day) are predominantly weekday day degrees. Education degrees (about 60 percent weekday evenings), business degrees (about 60 percent weekday evenings), and computer science degrees (about 55 percent weekday evenings) are predominantly weekday evening degrees.

All degrees are more commonly taken by adults at four-year colleges than at two-year colleges; however, some are more predominantly taken at four-year colleges than others. About 90 percent of all education degrees are taken at four-year colleges because most education degrees are taken at the graduate level. About 70 percent of all business degrees are taken at four-year colleges, while about 70 percent of all engineering degrees are taken at four-year colleges.

The degrees with the highest percentage of adult students who receive between 76 percent and 100 percent tuition reimbursement from employers are engineering (about 40 percent), business (about 35 percent), and computer science (about 35 percent). Health degrees are paid for only about 15 percent of the time, and education degrees only about 10 percent of the time.

The College Board established the Office of Adult Learning Services (OALS) in 1980 with a twofold purpose: to assist colleges with recruitment and assessment of adult students, and to assist adults with decisions about college study. OALS carries out several activities to support its purposes. They include:

- research to advance knowledge about adult learning
- development and testing of new ideas for services
- dissemination of knowledge about adult learning
- evaluation of needed services

At the same time, OALS provides assistance to colleges and/or individual adults in the following ways.

Technical Services

The Community Assessment Program (CAP). This major service offered by OALS is a five-part market survey for colleges, universities, and organizations that want to determine the supply and demand for adult learning in their communities. It can guide a college in improving and/or expanding its services to adults.

CAP is unique. Most surveys of adult learning deal with "need" or "interest," but such studies usually yield results that grossly overestimate what adults actually do. CAP is not a needs assessment program, rather, it examines the actual demand for learning. In order to acquire accurate information about probable adult learning behavior, CAP surveys adults to find out what they have studied in the past year and what study plans they have for the following year. CAP also surveys organizations to identify their actual plans for further education and training.

The Office of Adult Learning Services contends that a college can attract more adults if the college understands what adults will study, when they will study, and where they will study. CAP has served more than 50 colleges, two-year and four-year, large and small, public and independent, in all regions of the country.

Doing Business With Business. This service can help colleges form profitable relationships with local companies for the education and training of their employees, through credit or noncredit courses, taught at the college or at the company. Going beyond traditional arrangements involving tuition reimbursement, faculty exchange, or facility use, contract training enables a college to work directly with an organization to provide instruction to its employees, clients, or members.

OALS staff has interviewed more than 500 businesses, government agencies, and voluntary associations to locate contract-training opportunities for client colleges. Through the Doing Business with Business service, OALS staff can also guide colleges in the selection of organizations to be interviewed, conduct telephone interviews with management officials to screen those organizations most likely to contract with the college, schedule and conduct face-to-face interviews with decision makers at these organizations, and provide the results of the process in a final report.

Training

OALS Seminars. For the past six years, OALS has conducted workshops and seminars for college administrators on a variety of topics dealing with adult learning. Held in major cities throughout the country, the seminars have attracted more than 2,500 participants representing over 1,000 institutions. Among the topics presented have been "Marketing to Adult Learners," "Recruiting Adult Students," "Making Business and Industry Your New Clientele," "Expanding Educational Services with Business and Industry," "Enrollment Management and the Adult Student," "Marketing Higher Education to Adults," and "Business and Higher Education: Partnerships that Work."

Workshops Where You Work. These are special one-day, on-site workshops held throughout the year at the request of individual colleges. These professional-development sessions for administrators and faculty members are conducted by OALS staff and/or outside experts, depending on the topic and the objectives of the college.

Institute for the Management of Lifelong Education (MLE). This is a cooperative effort between the College Board and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. MLE assists leaders of higher education in determining new directions, defining changing roles, and implementing lifelong education effectively. The two-week June program serves approximately 100 administrators annually.

If you wish to receive additional information about any of these activities, please write to: Office of Adult Learning Services, The College Board, 45 Columbus Avenue, New York, New York 10023-6992.

Americans in Transition: Life Changes as Reasons for Learning. Carol B. Aslanian and Henry M. Brickell. 1980. 170 pages (001273) $6.50.

Americans in Transition: Life Changes as Reasons for Learning, and How Americans in Transition Study for College Credit. *Two-book set.* (218100) $13.95.

40 Million Americans in Career Transition: The Need for Information. Solomon Arbeiter, Carol B. Aslanian, Frances A. Schmerbeck, Henry M. Brickell. 1978. 55 pages. (237403) $4.50.

Finding Financial Resources for Adult Learners: Profiles for Practice. 1985. 56 pages. (002067) $8.95.

Higher Education in Rural America: Serving the Adult Learner. Douglas M. Treadway. 1984. 72 pages. (001761) $8.95.

Improving Financial Aid Services for Adults: A Program Guide. Ronald H. Miller, Editor. 1983. 120 pages. (238803) $6.00.

Independent Scholarship: Promise, Problems, and Prospects. Ronald Gross and Beatrice Gross. 1983. 68 pages. (001648) $7.95.

The Admissions Strategist: Recruiting in the 1980s. No. 3: Special issue on adult recruitment. 1985. 74 pages. (209104) $6.00.

The Admissions Strategist: Recruiting in the 1980s. No. 11: Special issue on enrollment management and the adult student. 1988. 64 pages. (209124) $6.00.

The College Board Guide to Going to College While Working: Strategies for Success. Gene Hawes. 1985. 160 pages. (002075). $9.95.

Training by Contract: College-Employer Profiles. 1983. 82 pages. (001753) $8.95.

To order any of these publications, specify the item number (listed in parentheses) and title desired, and send requests with a check made payable to the College Board, or send an institutional purchase order, to: College Board Publications, Box 886, New York, New York 10101-0886. Allow 30 days for 4th class bookrate delivery. Postage will be charged on orders received on purchase order and on any order requesting a faster method of shipment.

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How Americans in Transition Study for College Credit

The extraordinary growth in the number of adults studying for college credit and the extraordinary uncertainty among college administrators as to how adults study for college credit were two conditions that compelled us to undertake this study.

Answering questions such as the following was another reason for undertaking this investigation:

- *Are adults committed to credit study, or do they drop out before completing their courses of study?*
- *Does it really take five or seven or nine adults to equal the credit load taken by one younger student, or does it take only two or three adults?*
- *Do adults study only at night, or can they be attracted to campus during the day?*
- *Do adults require all manner of academic and psychological support services, or are they more self-sufficient than younger students?*
- *Do adults need large amounts of financial aid, or can they make it financially on their own?*

We have attempted to find answers to these questions and it is hoped that the data and findings in this report will help those who are similarly interested in the phenomenon of six million adults who seek credit annually, whether during the day or evening, for degrees or individual credit courses, or for career or other purposes.

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ISBN: 0-87447-312-8
003128